

**SRI RAMANUJAN
PUBLICATION
APOORVA RAMAYANA**

ORIGINALLY WRITTEN IN TAMIL BY
JAGADACHARYA SIMHASANADHIPATHI, VYAKHYANA VACHASPATHI
Sri Kanchi P. B. ANNANGARACHARYA SWAMY



RENDERED INTO ENGLISH BY
SRI S. SATYAMURTHI IYENGAR
(OF GWALIOR)



PRINTED AT
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INTRODUCTION

The Itihasas and Puranas have traditionally been looked upon as interpreters of the Vedas, whose real meaning lies hidden and is beyond the reach of semi-educated people :—

इतिहासपुराणाभ्यां वेद समुपबृंहयेत् । विमेत्यल्पश्रुताद्वेदः मामयं प्रतरिष्यति ॥

Coming to Sri Ramayana, we can easily find out that it is the foremost among such interpreters, because, firstly it is the first Itihasa, and secondly it itself states that it was expressly written to explain the Vedas: वेदोपबृंहणार्थाय तावन्नाहयत प्रभुः । (Bala. 4—6). Moreover, the well-known verse,

वेदवेद्ये परे पुंसि जाते दशरथात्मजे । वेदः प्राचेतसादासीत् साक्षात् रामायणात्मना ॥

tells us that the Vedas themselves took an incarnation in the form of Valmiki Ramayana, when Veda-vedya Paramapurusha, came down upon the earth, in the form of Sri Rama, son of Dasaratha. Therefore our elders have rightly held the view, that this great work, Sri Ramayana, was not primarily intended to be just a story-teller or a mere piece of poetry, although it can be, and in fact, is being read by many for its aesthetic beauty and interesting story. A thorough study of the works of our Purvacharyas will dispel any doubt, that might be lingering in the minds of light-hearted people, in this respect.

One of the five reputed Acharyas of Sri Ramanujacharya was his maternal uncle, Srisailapurna, who was a direct desciple of the great Yamuna-charya, the foremost among Sri Vaishnava Acharyas. It is said that Sri Ramanujacharya, while on his visit to Tirupati (where this teacher was living), stayed with him for a whole year and studied Sri Ramayana at his feet. It is for this reason, that his Tanian (hymn) “पितामहस्यापि पितामहाय...” is being recited, even today, while reading the Ramayana. Sri Ramanuja was not a school-going boy of tender age, at that time: He was, on the other hand, a great scholar and famous teacher, by then. But still, it took him a year to study Sri Ramayana! This one fact is sufficient to open our eyes to the fact that this great book is a vast store-house of knowledge.

In order to present, before the discerning public, some of these noble teachings of this monumental work, Sri Kanchi P. B. Annangaracharya Swami, brought out a book in Tamil, called Apoorva Ramayana, about a decade ago. In this, he elucidated and explained the whole story of the Ramayana, in the light of the sixteen questions put by Valmiki to sage Narada; *vide* the opening sarga of the Ramayana, called Samkshepa Ramayana.

Under the pretext of elucidating and answering these questions, Sri Swamiji explains, in great detail, how Sri Rama answers to the oft-repeated description of his, as being full of auspicious qualities. This book, has had a wide circulation among Tamilians and has run into several editions. But, naturally, non-Tamilians cannot read and enjoy it. So, with a sincere desire to help them, too, to appreciate the beauties of this work, Sri S. Satyamurti (Iyengar) of Gwalior, has rendered it into easy flowing English. We are sure, that by going through the pages of this neatly-written book, one can easily understand and appreciate some of the manifold subtleties of Sri Ramayana.

Sri P. B. A. Swami has also published, in his Samskrit journal, Vaidika Manohara, another thesis called Sri Ramayana Sarartha Satakam. This, too, elucidates many beautiful and knotty points of the Ramayana, to the great enjoyment of its readers; but its style and manner of approach are different from that of the Apoorva Ramayana. We hope that some scholar would come forward to render it also, into English. In fact, Sri Swamiji has written hundreds of books, which go to enhance the spiritual knowledge, critical acumen and intellectual enjoyment of his readers; they all deserve to be translated into different languages, so as to cater to the needs of a wider and wider section of the public. We hope that more and more of such translations will appear in due course.

T. A. SAMPATHKUMARACHARYA, M. A.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Sri VAISHNAVA SAMPRADAYA LITERATURE

P. B. Annangaracharya, Editor, Granthamala, Kancheepuram.

All the important books, pertaining to Sri Vaishnava Sampradaya, have been published by us in Tamil, Telugu, Sanskrit and Hindi Languages. The Divyaprabandhas of the Alwars and Sthothras of our Purvacharyas have been translated into the above languages and are being published with suitable annotations. There are some English publications also. Three monthly journals in Tamil, Telugu and Sanskrit-cum-Hindi are also being published. Apply for detailed price-list.

PREFACE

This book is intended to serve at once as a key to the *Adi Kavya* (First poetry) written by Valmiki and a critical appreciation of the Shastric principles embedded in it. While this work closely follows the “Apoorva Ramayanam”, written several years ago, by that great intellectual giant and scholar of scholars, Jagadacharya Simhasanadhipathi Sri P. B. Annangaracharya Swami of Kancheepuram (South India), an attempt has now been made to present it in English, in a racy, chatty style with perfect conversational ease, so as to make it easily understood and appreciated even by senior class students all over the country. In a manner of talking, it is a free rendering of the original work with refreshing additions wherever needed, and shorn of all minor and intricate details and anecdotes, which, if not digressive as such, might detract from the attention of the young reader without much of a background of this great classic. The name of the original work has been retained, as it should be. It is indeed a novel way of handling this epic, which only intellectual stalwarts and scholars of the eminence and standing of Sri Annangaracharya Swamiji Maharaj can conceive and project. May the Almighty, in His own interest, grant the Swamiji many more years of service to his countrymen!

The undersigned will feel amply requited for his labour in presenting this volume in English, if

- (i) it has a wide circulation all over the country—North, South, East and West and also abroad and
- (ii) it stimulates right thinking of and reverential approach to the greatest classic of all climes and ages.

This is most respectfully and humbly dedicated to Sri Annangaracharya Swamiji.

Gwalior, }
10-12-1962. }

S. Satyamurthi.



APOORVA RAMAYANA



(by S. SATYAMURTHI, Gwalior)

[Adopted from the Tamil work of the same name by
Sri Kanchee P. B. Annangaracharya Swami.]



CHAPTER I

Of the two great Ithihasas, Ramayana and Mahabharata, the former is known as Ithihasa Ratna (Gem). They are vast storehouses of knowledge, which we, in this world, could freely draw upon both for our day to day conduct and spiritual uplift. To those of us, who are generally inclined to draw all inspiration from the west, I should say, in passing, that to compare Ramayana and Mahabharata with the works of Shakespeare, Milton etc., would be somewhat like thinking of the great Pacific ocean in terms of the English Channel. The *Adi Kavya* (1st poetry) composed by Sri Valmiki Bhagavan was a contemporaneous document portraying the events in the life of Sri Rama faithfully just as they occurred, unlike the other pieces written by others thereafter, introducing a good many changes here and there, according to their own individual concepts and poetic imagery. It is a matter of common knowledge that a *Visesha Prasna* (Special question) brings out a limited reply confined to the four corners of the specific subject to which the question relates, whereas a *Samanya Prasna* (general question) elicits a comprehensive reply (*visesha uttaram*), covering a very wide area, dealing with the various aspects of the question, which, in view of its general nature, would warrant such peregrinations. This can be illustrated from both the Ithihasas, referred to above. To a general question put by Yudhishtira (*viz*)

किमेकं दैवतं लोके किं वाप्येकं परायणम् । स्तुवन्तः कं कर्मन्तः प्राप्नुयुर्मानवाः शुभम् ॥

को धर्मः सर्वधर्माणां भवतः परमो मतः । किं जपन्मुच्यते जन्तुर्जन्मसंसारबन्धनात् ?

“Who is the foremost among the pantheon of Dewas ? Which is the best means of attaining Him ? By worshipping whom do we secure all benefits ? Of the various Dharmas, which, according to you, is the highest ? What is that Mantra by chanting which we, in this world, could secure emancipation from the (terrific) bondage of Samsara as well as the (dreadful) cycle of births and deaths ?” Sri Bhishma had to give an elaborate reply known as Sri Vishnu Sahasranama, which is being chanted daily both morning and evening by all those who have the good fortune to be conscious of its wonderful efficacy. Likewise,

Ramayana is just the reply to a general question put by Sri Valmiki to Sri Narada Bhagavan, (viz)

“ को न्वस्मिन्सांप्रतं लोके गुणवान्कश्च वीर्यवान्.....कस्य बिभ्यति देवाश्च जातरोषस्य संयुगे? ”

(Who is there in this world, at this time, who is at once an embodiment of the sixteen traits, referred to in the above Slokas?) It is thus obvious that an effective way of handling Ramayana would be to delve into a study of each of these traits as exemplified by Sri Rama juxtaposing the various episodes which bring to the fore these great qualities displayed by the Lord on earth. Sri Ramachandra remained on earth over quite a long period, namely, 11,000 years, only to illuminate and educate the people around by his exemplary conduct and noble traits. Ravana vadha (Slaying of Ravana) was quite an insignificant part of the Avatar and was in fact accomplished by Sri Rama as early as in his 38th year.

When the Lord came down to earth as Sri Rama, the Vedas also came down in a symbolic sense, as Sri Ramayana:—

“ वेदवेद्ये परे पुंसि जाते दशरथात्मजे । वेदः प्राचेतसादासीत् साक्षाद्रामायणात्मना ॥ ”

The following is just an attempt at this kind of study.

(1) को गुणवान् ? (Who is the repository of goodness?)

What is the special trait referred to in this question? In one voice the Acharyas say that it refers to Sowseelyam, “सौशील्यम्-महतो मन्दैस्सह नीरन्ध्रेण संश्लेषः” that is, a superior person mixing up very freely with one far inferior to him in all respects, otherwise than in a spirit of condescension. *Ab initio*, the very fact of His Avatar makes His Bhaktas feel and gratefully realise His Sowseelya. The word “Avatar” means descent, and the Lord of the universe, who is beyond comprehension by word, deed or thought, whom even the Sages have to realise through the most arduous processes of श्रुति, मनन, निदिध्यासन, and दृष्टि-(दृष्टव्यः श्रोतव्यो मन्तव्यो निदिध्यासितव्यः) has come down on earth to live in our midst, in surroundings far inferior and partaking of all that life under human conditions entails. The *omni present*, all-pervading Lord reduced Himself to a position, whereby He would be confined to the person (Divya mangalavighraha) of “Rama” and recognised in that form and called as such.

King Dasaratha could hardly reconcile himself with the idea of risking his darling son, Rama, just 12 years old, on such a mighty and blood-scurdling

undertaking as encountering the formidable demon, Thataka and her sons and yet he had to yield to sage Viswamitra on the advice of Sage Vasishta, the Kula Guru. Rama could slay Thataka effortlessly—just one arrow did the job. The brothers (Rama and Lakshmana) successfully piloted the yaga and routed the Rakshasas who were bent upon obstructing its course. Even the great Viswamitra, who tried to disillusion king Dasaratha, the fondling father, by pointing out that Rama was none other than the Lord of the universe, Who had come down to earth, and that he (Dasaratha) should just cease thinking in terms of the outer form—the darling child, (अहं वेद्मि महात्मानं रामं सत्यपराक्रमम् etc.) got frightened out of his wits at the sight of the gigantic Thataka and started praying for Rama's safety—“स्वस्ति राघवयोरस्तु जयं चैवाभ्यभाषत”. Well, what a grand achievement, adding a lustrous feather to Rama's cap and yet how simple was he, without the least inkling of pride in him! After the successful conclusion of the yaga, the divine lads (Rama and Lakshmana) had, strictly speaking, fulfilled the specific engagement for which Viswamitra had requisitioned their services. But look at the acme of simplicity of the princes, when Rama addressed the sage, as follows:—

इमौ स मुनिशार्दूल ! किंकरो समुपस्थितौ । आज्ञापय यथेष्टं वै शासनं करवाव किम् ॥

“ We, my brother and I, are your humble servants, from whom you can take service, as much as you like ”.

When king Dasaratha disclosed to his subjects, his intention to instal his eldest son Rama on the throne, they greeted it vociferously, not because they were by any means fed up with the reign of Dasaratha, but because of the immeasurable love they bore for Rama, who had by then endeared himself through his sweet manners, punctilious care and attention, to one and all. The preparations for the coronation were well under way and it was just a matter of hours for the coronation to become an accomplished fact, when the old and hapless King, suddenly thrown into a state of mental imbalance by the importunate queen Kaikeyi, exiled Rama. Two boons granted to the queen by the king, several hundreds of years ago, consigned as it were, to the limbo of oblivion, were suddenly pressed forward by the queen, to secure not merely Rama's dislodgment from the throne, but also his exile into the forest over a period of 14 years. The king threw himself up into a paroxysm of grief and could hardly see things in their proper perspective—how the boons called into play by Kaikeyi could not override an earlier commitment of the king for handing over the reins of the kingdom to Rama, for which preparations were already in full swing. But, how did Rama receive and react to the king's sudden revulsion of thought, as conveyed by Kaikeyi herself? Whereas a

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lesser person would have been loath to part with the Rajyasree, which was not merely his as a matter of right, but was also within his immediate reach. Rama became jubilant and glow on his face surpassed the bloom of the fully-blossomed lotus. He greeted the announcement with immense delight, saying “वनवासो महोदयः”. He revelled at the thought that the exile would throw open to him ample opportunities for exhibiting that most coveted quality of his, viz, Sowseelyam. Let us then proceed to see how he realised this objective of his, during his exile.

The earliest opportunity presented itself when the illustrious Prince of that great clan of Ikshvaku befriended Guha, the hunter *cum* boat-man, who carried the party across the Ganga. Valmiki introduces Guha to us as “रामस्य आत्मसमस्सखा”. They embraced each other with all the affection at their command. Did the very low parentage and occupation of Guha as compared with Rama's exalted position, detract from the latter's love for the former? Not at all. On the other hand, Rama adopted Guha as his fourth brother and felt enriched by the addition of yet another brother—a positive gain even in the early stages of the exile. This was followed up by similar additions to his fraternity during his exile (viz) Sugreeva, the monkey king and Vibhishana, the king of the Rakshasas. Oh! what a combination, which can go only with Rama's aforesaid quality of Sowseelyam!

It was Rama's devout wish that he should visit the Rishis of Dandakaranya in their respective Ashrams, enquire their needs and place his services at their disposal. But the impatient Rishis came forward a few steps and encountered Rama by exhibiting their physical sufferings at the hands of the Rakshasas. Rama's heart bled at the thought that he could not push ahead a little faster and meet the Rishis in their abodes and enquire about their welfare, without putting them to the trouble and inconvenience of having to come out of their places. He apologised to them by saying

“प्रसीदन्तु भवन्तो मे ह्रीरेषा हि ममातुला। यदीदृशैरहं विप्रैरुपस्थेयैरुपस्थितः॥”

Oh! what a paragon of simplicity and how unostentatious!

It was Kabandha, who spoke appreciatively of Sabari, the huntress, in the following terms, to Rama:—

“श्रमणीं धर्मनिपुणां अभिगच्छ” “श्रमणी शबरीनाम काकुत्स्थ ! चिरजीविनी, त्वां तु धर्मे स्थिता नित्यम्”

The “Dharma” referred to here is “Guru Susrusha” or service to the Guru. That is why Rama asked Sabari, grown grey in the service of the Rishis, as soon as he met her,

कच्चिते गुरुशुश्रूषा सफला चारुभाषिणि ? (3-47-9)

[i. e. "Have you been able to put through your Gura Susrusha effectively?"] The highly evolved huntress replied that the Rishis whom she served had all departed from this world for heaven and invoked Rama's sweet grace to enable her to attain their feet in heaven. Rama was immensely pleased with her spiritual fervour and Guru Bakthi and readily accepted the queer offering of fruits partly eaten by Sabari herself by way of tasting them and sampling out those worth being offered to Rama, some day when he would visit her place. Was it not the enormous devotion (Bhakti) of that good old woman, which preserved the fruits bitten and kept by her, days on end? What else is that or could it be, when the modern scientific facilities for fruit preservation were beyond her reach? One should again marvel at Rama's शीलं in gladly accepting the fruits. Did he not make the grand announcement, as Lord Krishna, in Bhagavad Gita

“पत्रं पुष्पं फलं तोयं यो मे भक्त्या प्रयच्छति । तदहं भक्त्युपहृतं अश्रामि प्रयतात्मनः ?”

Yet another place, where this exemplary trait of Rama is in great evidence is when Ravana stood before Rama in the battlefield, completely disarmed—“चचाल चापञ्च मुमोच वीरः”. Ravana, whose misdeeds were so notorious that one should shudder at the mere mention thereof, deserved to be liquidated then and there, even from the most liberal ethical standards; and yet Rama, in his unbounded generosity and overwhelming goodness, bade him to get back to Lanka and return to the battlefield the next day, refreshed and duly equipped, for resuming the fight—

“अच्छानुजानामि रणादितः त्वम् प्रविश्य रात्रिचरराज लङ्काम्; आश्वास निर्याहि”.

Implied in this command of Rama lies something even far more appealing, (viz) Ravana was required to take time till the following day only for equipping himself for the battle, but he was at liberty to surrender himself to Rama's unfailing grace that very moment. While dealing with this aspect, one is simply touched by Rama's tenderness of heart, which tries merely to bend and not to break, even such a heinous offender as Ravana. Alas! Ravana, who was rushing to his doom would not bend and he fell on his back even while dying 'न नमेयम्'. Non-submissiveness was his prakriti, swabhava (i.e.) ingrained quality.

CHAPTER II

(2) “कः वीर्यवान्” (Who is valourous?)

A true Bhakta meditating on Sri Rama's *Simplicity Galore* as illustrated in the preceding Chapter, thaws down in rapturous admiration of that extraordinary quality and finds it difficult to sustain himself except by turning his attention to the next trait, viz, Sri Rama's Supreme valour. Valour comprises the three great qualities of “वीर्य”, “शौर्य”, and “पराक्रम”. These connote (1) remaining undaunted by the immensity of the enemy's size and strength, (2) vanquishing the enemy single-handed and with ease, and (3) coming off unscathed in the process, respectively. Sri Rama was also known by the name of “Maha Veera.” c. f. Sri Vedanta Desika's opening line of Raghu Veera Gadya “जय जय महावीर!” and the great Sanskrit poet, Bhava Bhuti's “महावीर चरितम्”.

In the previous chapter there was a passing mention of the manner in which Sree Rama, a mere lad of twelve, did away with the formidable Thataka and ensured the successful conclusion of the great Yaga performed by Viswamitra, by encountering the meddlesome Rakshasas and pushing them off to a safe distance. Again in the early stages of the exile the amorous advances of Surpanakha, Ravana's younger sister were repelled by Rama and the threat to Sita's life from Surpanakha, which followed in its wake, resulted in the latter's facial disfigurement by Lakshmana. The irate Surpanakha, who took a more serious view of her disappointment in love than even her physical injuries, sought refuge in her cousin by name Khara in nearby Janasthana and the infuriated Rakshasa unleashed on Rama the entire horde of Rakshasas under him, commanded by as many as fourteen thousand generals. Rama vanquished them all, single-handed, in the amazingly short period of an hour and a half (Muhurtam) and the most powerful Khara, who came last, got his head chopped off, in no time, by Rama, who continued to fight unaided and, therefore, came to be proclaimed as “असहायशूर” and “वीरराघव”. The Rishis of Dandakaranya were tense with excitement when they watched this unequal battle of one against so many.

“चतुर्दश सहस्राणि रक्षसां भीमकर्मणाम् । एकश्च रामो धर्मात्मा कथं युद्धं भविष्यति ॥”

Ravana, though formidable by himself, was a tiny little dot, as compared to the great Karthaveeryarjuna, with his five hundred pairs of hands (as against a mere ten pairs of Ravana). Such a powerful person got all his hands smitten by Sri Parasurama's revengeful axe, and died. Could that Parasurama stand up before the Great Rama? No, certainly not, and he had to coolly retreat before “राम दिवाकर”.

And then, there was *Vali*, the powerful brother of *Sugreeva* and *Ravana* was a mere toy at his hands. It is said that *Vali* once playfully picked up *Ravana* by the tail, flew north, south, east and west to have his daily dip in the peripheral oceans of the earth, came home and, for a while, exhibited the ten-headed *Ravana* as a curious play-thing to baby *Angada*, who was kicking up inside the cradle in great amusement, before he (*Ravana*) was released. The sagacious *Hanuman* recounted before *Ravana*, the great prowess of *Sree Rama* and his invincibility—how the powerful *Vali*, whom *Ravana* knew too well, succumbed to a single arrow from *Sri Rama*'s unflinching and infallible bow.

“त्वया विज्ञातपूर्वश्च वाली वानरपुङ्गवः । रामेण निहतस्संख्ये शरेणैकेन वानरः ॥”

Unfortunately, this made no impression on *Ravana*, who was rushing to his doom. In fact, he had already been informed of the glorious victory of *Sree Rama* in *Janasthana* by his most beloved sister *Surpanakha*, who was an eyewitness; but even as *Surpanakha* remained enthralled by *Sri Rama*'s exquisite physical charm, notwithstanding the damage caused to her person, *Ravana* could hardly fix his thoughts on anything else except that part of *Surpanakha*'s narration describing the immense beauty of *Sita*. It was, however, in the battlefield, when *Ravana* was pitted, face to face, against *Sree Rama*, that he (*Ravana*) could have ocular proof of his opponent's superior prowess, which drew forth his awe-inspired admiration in the following words “ शत्रोः प्रख्यातवीर्यस्य रञ्जनीयस्य विक्रमैः ”. (*Yudha Kanda* 106-6)

Earlier, when *Ravana* unleashed his special Reserve forces—मूलबलं—the sheet-anchor, after the valiant *Rakshasas*, the war-heroes, on each one of whom *Ravana* had pinned enormous faith, had vanished one by one into the jaws of *Death*, the manner in which the extra-ordinary situation which struck unspeakable terror in the minds of the *Devatas*, who were witnessing the grim battle from above, was handled by *Sree Rama*, calls for special mention, in this context. The battle was as spectacular as it was terrific and *Valmiki* was simply thrilled by the uncanny and superhuman effort displayed by *Sree Rama* and described the battle as

छिन्नं भिन्नं शरैर्दग्धं प्रभङ्गं शस्त्रपीडितम् । बलं रामेण ददृशुर्न रामं शीघ्रकारिणम् ॥

(*Yudha Kanda* 94-22). *Rama* was hardly visible and yet one could see the enormous extent of destruction wrought by him. This only reveals the marvellous agility with which he went gyrating around, routing the enemy forces. A little further down (i. e.) in *Sloka* 27 it has been stated “ ते तु रामसहस्राणि रणे पश्यन्ति राक्षसाः ” (i. e.) thousands of *Ramas* were seen in

action. Again in the latter half of the same Sloka it has been stated “पुनः पश्यन्ति काकुत्स्थमेकमेव महाहवे ” (i. e.) Rama alone and none else could be seen in the battlefield. It was indeed a wonderful wonder of wonders, the way Sree Rama handled the situation, the grim and bewildering spectacle witnessed, as described in these slokas, which are apparently self-contradictory but actually bring out the thorough mastery and the supreme agility of that Great Archer. c. f. Bhagawat Gita 10-31 “ रामः शस्त्रभृतामहम् ”.

What we see and admire in Sree Rama is not the Parakrama of the “dare - devil” type, but Satya - Parakrama. c. f. “ अहं वेद्मि महात्मानं रामं सत्यपराक्रमम् ” (Viswamitra). He would not take mean advantage of the enemy's unguarded moments and push home the victory; on the other hand, he would give even such a fell adversary as Ravana, as much latitude as possible, hoping all the time, that he would get round, change his mind, restore Sita and surrender himself to his divine grace and avowed portection. When Vibhishana cried for Sree Rama's portection from his anchorage in the mid-air, Sri Rama said he would certainly admit into his fold, Vibhishana, even if he were Ravana come in disguise:

“आनयैनं हरिश्चेष्ट दत्तमस्याभयं मया । विभीषणो वा सुग्रीव ! यदि वा रावणः स्वयम् ॥”

Sree Rama would have been immensely delighted if Ravana had adopted that course, and, in a sense, it was wishful thinking on the part of Sri Rama. He deeply grieved over Ravana's death and there was not the slightest trace of bitterness, although such a heinous offender as Ravana hardly deserved any consideration. The truly great warrior that Rama was, he sternly insisted that Vibhishana should discharge his duties to his deceased brother and perform the last rites. When Vibhishana, who had severed his connections with Ravana, root and branch, demurred on the ground that the monster of a brother did not deserve any such treatment at his hands, Sree Rama remonstrated with him, saying,

मरणान्तानि वैराणि निर्वृत्तं नः प्रयोजनम् । क्रियतामस्य संस्कारो ममाप्नेष यथा तव ॥

This sloka is generally mis-interpreted to mean that bitterness towards Ravana should not be carried on the yonder side of death and that it should cease, once the main objective, namely, of slaying him and recovering Sita was achieved. This is doing less than justice to the *Karuna Kakutstha*, whose magnanimity knows no bounds. Sri Rama very much wished to do Ravana a good turn during the latter's life time, although he had committed a series of unpardonable atrocities such as oppression of the Maharishis and

uprooting their hermitage, abduction of Sita, mortally wounding Jatayu, the Vulture-king, who was dearer to Sri Rama than even king Dasaratha, etc. Even at the end of the penultimate day of the battle, Ravana was given a chance to redeem himself by surrendering to Rama, or at least have a night's rest and recuperation, “गच्छानुजानामि etc. etc.” (vide also Chapter I, where this has been dealt with elaborately.) Ravana, as long as he was alive, would not submit himself to Sri Rama's benevolence, but now that he (Ravana) was dead, he would no longer repel Sri Rama's good offices—that is, if Vibhishana performed the funeral rites at Rama's bidding, Ravana's corpse would not resist. While on this subject, it will be instructive to examine our own individual relationship with the Lord. The Lord, in His redemptive grace, can and does shed unlimited benevolence on us, far more than what we deserved or could have expected and it is generally believed that He expects nothing in return from us—verily, there is nothing we could call our own, to give back to the Lord. And yet the Lord does expect from us what is called “अप्रतिषेध” that is, our not moving in a divergent path, turning our back against Him and virtually declining the proffered help—the निर्हेतुक कृपा. The Lord is more than pleased with us, if we desisted from evil actions (दुष्कृत), even if we did not perform good acts (सुकृत).

The term “वीर्यम्” is also understood to mean that trait in the Lord, which strikes a responsive note in the minds of others, Himself undergoing no change in regard to His mental attitudes (अविकार), like unto the musks, which through its fragrance, influences the minds of those, who smell it, itself undergoing no physical or chemical change. “वीर्यम्” is one of the six main attributes of the Lord, Who is known as “षाङ्गव्यपरिपूर्ण (i. e.) possessing “ज्ञान, शक्ति, बल, ऐश्वर्य, वीर्य and तेजस्”.

In the case of Sri Rama also, this aspect is brought out by Sumantra, when he reported to King Dasaratha, after leaving Sree Rama on the banks of the Ganga, at the commencement of his exile, how separation from Rama affected even plant-life and made the trees, plants, creepers etc dwindle and dry up—

विषये ते महाराज! रामव्यसनकर्षिताः । अपि वृक्षाः परिम्लानास्सपुष्पाङ्कुरकोरकाः ॥
etc. etc.

CHAPTER III

(3) “कः धर्मज्ञः?” (Who knows Dharma?)

Dharma is the first of the four ‘Purusharthas’, the fundamental aspirations or values, according to the Indian, rather, the Hindu way of thinking. It is quite a comprehensive term, summing up the Hindu moral ideal. The word “धर्मज्ञः” means one who knows what ‘धर्म’ is. In the present context, we shall examine which of the various Dharmas described in the Shastras, Sree Rama upheld and practised.

In Sundara Kanda (38-41) Sita refers to ‘आनृशंस्य’ that is, sympathising with the suffering of others as the supreme Dharma. No wonder, Sree Rama’s ideal was identical with Sita’s. He was known as “Karuna Kakutstha”, the very incarnation of “करुणा”. This massive trait comprises within its sweet folds, tendencies described as अनुकंपा and अनुक्रोश. The former refers to a mental-cum-physical state, which makes one tremble with pity, at the mere sight of another soul shaken by grief, while the latter describes the wail of a person, who, unable to stand the grief of another, starts crying along with him. When king Dasaratha disclosed to his subjects his intention to hand over the reins of the kingdom to Rama, they acclaimed it with a spontaniety, which startled the old King, who mistook them and enquired forthwith whether it was tantamount to an expression of disgust and dissatisfaction with his long rule. Thereupon the subjects, while vindicating the old king, explained that they were overwhelmed by Rama’s goodness. Narrating the many sweet qualities of Rama, they, *inter alia*, referred to the aforementioned quality of परदुःखदुःखित्वम्—

व्यसनेषु मनुष्याणां भृशं भवति दुःखितः । उत्सवेषु च सर्वेषु पितेव परितुष्यति ॥ (2-2-40)

Rama would himself be immersed in grief at the sight of another’s distress, even as he was ready to share the enjoyment of others. The latter part of it pales into in-significance, compared to the former, which stamps out the truly large-hearted. But then, it might be asked why Rama, who was potent enough to relieve the distress of others, should plunge himself into their grief and become grief-stricken. This question obviously presupposes that it is only the impotent, who is afflicted with grief. Well, it is not so. Feeling for and identifying oneself with another’s grief, is entirely different from potentiality for doing good to another, that is, ridding him of his distress. As a simple and concrete instance, which will readily bring home the truth of this, let us take the case of one of our children, who is

suddenly taken ill and starts suffering from the effects of such illness. We are no doubt capable of affording the child the necessary relief and do employ adequate means to that end, but keep weighed down all the time, by a sense of regret that adequate prophylactic care had not been bestowed on the child and the suffering averted altogether. Did not the Lord run post-haste to the rescue of Gajendra, the pious elephant, when the latter appealed for help and yet how miserable did He feel over the sad plight to which Gajendra had been reduced by the age-long grim and titanic struggle with that terrific monster, the crocodile? Lord Krishna was full of remorse for His inability to present Himself before Draupadi when she appealed to Him for help, while she was being disrobed and disgraced in public—an incident which should make men hang their heads, in shame, for all time. Although Sri Krishna could ensure from where He was, that no harm was done to Draupadi, yet He could not secure His physical presence at that perilous hour, much as she pined for. How sorely Sri Krishna felt for this apparent remissness of His, (which the Acharyas, could, however, justify, stemming as it does from their immense love and devotion for Him) could be seen from the following *utterance* of His—

“ गोविन्देति यदाक्रन्दत्कुण्ठा मां दूरवासिनम् । ऋणं प्रवृद्धमिव मे हृदयात् नापसर्पति ॥ ”

“Oh! what a pity! It is only after Draupadi cried for help, under duress, I did something. I was not wary enough to prevent the incident altogether. Alas! I am terribly indebted to her.”

Such instances can be multiplied, but let us, for the present, confine ourselves to the four Corners of Ramayana and study this trait of Sri Rama.

When Vali was slain by Rama, Sugreeva was struck with grief and Rama, too, became grief-stricken. It was not feigned grief but genuine to the extent of making Valmiki describe in the opening sloka of the 25th Sarga in Kishkindha Kanda “समानशोकः काकुत्स्थः”—Rama’s grief was as great as that of ‘Thara’, Vali’s wife and ‘Angada’ her son. It has been stated a little earlier that while Sugreeva restrained his grief, Rama was so lost in grief, that he became insensate and powerless for a while.

King Janaka, while handing over Sita in marriage to Rama, referred to Sita as a very valuable partner, who will help her husband in the practice of Dharma—“इयं सीता तव सहधर्मचरी” (Prose-order). Dharma, as practised by Rama, was expounded by Sita in her advice (Hithopadesa) to Ravana in Sundara Kanda-21-20—“विदितः स हि धर्मज्ञः शरणागतवत्सलः”. It is noteworthy that she

referred to Rama as “ धर्मज्ञ ” and at once expanded it so as to bring out its content (viz) शरणागतवत्सलः—protecting those who seek his protection. Sita was an indispensable ingredient in the dispensation of this Dharma and Ramayana is replete with instances to show that, whenever she was by the side of Rama, even the worst offenders could be salved, while those with a lesser degree of offence met with a different fate during her absence.

In the vast array of Rakshasas and other enemies, *Thataka* and *Subahu* were among the earliest to be vanquished by Rama, but that happened before his marriage. The wily *Surpanakha* could have also been killed outright, instead of being just mutilated and left to carry a complaint to *Ravana*, which led to the abduction of Sita. But she was not killed, mainly due to Sita's presence. *Vali* was slain after Sita's abduction. In his admirable address to Rama, *Vali* himself observed from his death-bed, that he would not have been dealt with in that manner, if only Sita had been by the side of Rama (*Kamba-Ramayanam*). *Maricha*, who came in the disguise of a golden deer, seemingly eluded Rama and carried him over a considerable distance before being shot dead. Was it really so difficult for Rama, the great archer to tackle the deer? The truth of the matter was, that *Maricha* could not have been slain by Rama anywhere in the neighbourhood of Sita. Likewise, *Viradha*, *Khara*, *Dushana* and others were killed only when Sita was not by the side of Rama. On the other hand, *Jayantha*, *Indra's* son, who assumed the form of a crow to have a look round the earth and played havoc in *Chitrakoot* by pecking at Sita's breast and drawing forth lots of blood, could survive. Rama, sleeping on Sita's lap woke up in great consternation when blood trickled down on him from the enormous wound on Sita's breast. Rama pulled out a grass from his 'Darbhasana—a mattress made of 'Kusa' grass—and aimed it against *Jayantha*. The missile gave *Jayantha* a hot chase wherever he went and yet he could not get asylum anywhere. He came back and fell down dead-beat, in front of Rama, with legs pointing towards him. Sita who was grace personified— “ देव्या कारुण्यरूपया ”—corrected the posture of the crow, in a trice, and made it appear that he was prostrating before Rama. Not only that, she pleaded with Rama for the deliverance of the crow, as brought out in the following Slokas of 'Padma Puranam'.

पुरतः पतितं देवी धरण्यां वायसं तदा । तच्छिरः पादयोस्तस्य योजयामास जानकी ॥

प्राणसंशयमापन्नं दृष्ट्वा सीता तु वायसम् । त्राहि त्राहीति भर्तारमुवाच दयया विभुम् ॥

Rama, therefore, let off the crow, who deserved to be slain, with a slight injury, blinding one of his eyes.

“वधाहमपि काकुत्स्थः कृपया पर्यपालयन्” (Sundara Kanda 38-35).

The word “कृपया” in this Sloka would, on the face of it, mean that Rama spared the crow out of grace, while it does actually refer to Sita, who is synonymous with ‘कृपा’, being sheer personification of ‘Grace’. There need not be the least inkling of a doubt that, but for Sita’s unbounded generosity, Jayantha, the crow had absolutely no chance of survival. Even Ravana would not have been slain, if Sita had been there in the battlefield, instead of staying in ‘Asoka Vana’, all the time. It might be argued that Ravana’s mental make-up was different from Jayantha’s and he (Ravana) would not submit himself to Rama’s protection and, therefore, had not the ghost of a chance for survival—“न नमेयं तु कस्यचित्.” For the matter of that, Jayantha’s episode, as narrated above, clearly proves that even Jayantha did not perform शरणागति of his own accord and it was because of the magic wrought by Sita’s presence, that Rama could bring himself to believe and accept Jayantha as a शरणागत. Probing into the inner meaning of शरणागति, the very essence of it is found to lie in our abstaining from placing obstacles before the Lord, when He extends His benevolent protection to us. Judged by this canon, Ravana too, was given every chance to submit himself to Rama’s grace and protection. Was not Ravana’s condition at the end of his first personal battle described by Valmiki as चंचाल चापञ्च मुमोच वीरः, forlorn beyond description, and yet did not Rama, the महावीर let him go and have a night’s rest and come back the following day for resuming the battle, if he chose not the other alternative of surrendering himself that very moment? Rama’s magnanimity should have certainly been evocative enough and produced a favourable reaction in Ravana’s mind but, alas! that did not happen because he did not have the benefit of Sita’s presence on the spot and her supreme Grace, the unfailing corrective, which stood Jayantha in good stead, although he had wrought physical injury on Sita and his offence was, therefore, far greater than Ravana’s.

The foregoing is an attempt to study Rama, the great apostle of Sarana-gathi Sastra “धर्मज्ञः शरणागतवत्सलः” referred to by Sita in her hithopadesha to Ravana and the manner in which Rama put through that Dharma in conjunction with his “सहधर्मचरी”. In the list of ‘Purusharthas’ referred to in the opening sentence of this Chapter, Dharma comes first and is followed by अर्थ (Artha) “काम” (Kama) and “मोक्ष” (Moksha). That Sree Rama gave

precedence to Dharma over everything else, is amply brought out by the fact that he gave up अर्थ (the throne) with pleasure and literally courted exile (वनवासो महोदयः); and 'काम' too did not convey any special appeal to him and he would not hesitate to get himself parted from Sita on the slightest pretext. Without, however, going into the right or wrong of the banishment of Sita, the gem of a woman, the very symbol of Indian womanhood and a jewel adorned by 'Chastity', unlike other women to whom 'Chastity' is a jewel, we shall, in the present context, be contented with the observation that 'Dharma' or Duty was paramount in Sree Rama's eyes and special emphasis was laid on it by him, all through. While giving up the throne, in the first instance, and going into exile he threw away his rights and privileges in a light-hearted fashion, but would, under no circumstance, give up his duties and responsibilities.

CHAPTER IV

4. कः कृतज्ञः? (Who is grateful?)

A कृतज्ञ is one, who keeps remembering always the good done to him by others. Indeed, this quality in a person stands foremost among the many good qualities, which mankind has inherited. The scriptures in different claims and ages have proclaimed all along, that a कृतज्ञ, i. e., he who disowns or forgets the benefit accrued to him through another, is damned beyond redemption and there is no question of future atonement for him. And yet, it is not an uncommon failing in man, who not merely makes it a point to forget the good done to him in a distant past but also returns evil for good, even during the currency of such benefaction. It should certainly have been out of sheer disgust that a Saint once declared that this quality, known in common parlance as gratitude, can be found only in inanimate things and cited, in support, the example of the coconut tree, which holds sweet milk in its cups for our benefit although it received from us filthy, waste water only. In this world of human affairs, therefore, this sacred quality is rarely to be met with and yet this was displayed in abundance by Sree Rama in his portrayal of the ideal man. The following sloka in Ayodhya Kanda brings out this great trait of Rama vividly—

कश्चिदुपकारेण कृतेनैकेन तुष्यति । न सरत्यपकाराणां शतमपि आत्मवत्तया ॥

If a person had helped him in any manner, Rama would cherish it for all time, even if such help was not rendered intentionally; while on the other hand, he would not take to heart even if a person had deliberately inflicted on him hundreds of injuries. Don't we see how Rama lavished his kindness

on Sugreeva, the Monkey King, and Vibhishana, the King of the Rakshasas? Well! what is it that they had done for Rama, that he should bestow on them that much attention and affection?

When Rama and Lakshmana were wending their weary way, extremely fatigued, both physically and mentally, after Sita's abduction, they were met by Hanuman, who was destined to play a prominent part thereafter. Sugreeva had sent the sagacious Hanuman to meet the princes, for his (Sugreeva's) own selfish ends and yet Rama would take it as a piece of benefaction. Again, Vibhishana had done nothing more than coming down from Lanka to Sri Rama's camp and seeking refuge in Rama. And yet, Rama not merely admitted into his fold, Vibhishana, but also identified himself completely with the new-comer. This is evident from the way Rama enquired of Vibhishana regarding the might of the Rakshasas, the size and disposition of the army:— “आख्याहि मम तत्वेन राक्षसानां बलाबलम्”. Instead of asking Vibhishana to disclose the strength of his stock or Ravana's, Rama distinguished Vibhishana entirely from the Rakshasas looking upon him as one of his own illustrious clan of Ikshavaku and asked him for a report regarding the Rakshasas. The enormous dimensions of Rama's grace and the readiness with which he unreservedly mingled with his votaries can be brought home even more vividly, if you contrast this with the utterance of Ravana, who dubbed Vibhishana as “कुलपांसन”—the arch enemy and destroyer of his clan.

Vibhishana was admitted into Rama's camp in the teeth of violent opposition, after a heated discussion in the conclave, which was held as soon as Vibhishana addressed the सर्वलोकशरण्य from a parlous position in the mid-air above Rama's camp. The bitterest opponent and to use a familiar expression, the leader of the opposition was Sugreeva. It was, therefore, in the fitness of things that the finale of this tense and thrilling drama was left to Sugreeva. In his supreme wisdom, as a constitutional expert, Rama bade Sugreeva to conduct Vibhishana unto His Gracious Presence. But look at Rama's magnanimity of wondrous depth, when he instructed Sugreeva not to come away, if on a closer study, the newcomer turned out to be, not Vibhishana as such, but Ravana in disguise, but bring him also. “विभीषणो वा सुग्रीव ! यदि वा रावणस्त्वयम्”. It should either be that Rama's magnanimity knew no bounds, or there should be some merit in Ravana, to deserve such a consideration at Rama's hands. For aught we know, there was not the least inkling of सुकृतं in Ravana to mitigate the heinous offence committed by him and make Rama well disposed

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to him. This takes us to the region of what is known as अज्ञात सुकृत, which, in turn, leads us on to the Lord's redemptive Grace.

Going into the derivative meaning of the word कृतज्ञ (viz.) कृतं जानाति इति कृतज्ञः, a कृतज्ञ is one, who realises the import of the acts done. It is only the omniscient Lord of the universe, who can comprehend the acts done by the vast multitude of the Jeova Rasis every moment. Our acts fall under two broad categories. viz., good (सुकृत) and bad (दुष्कृत). The former can be further subdivided into ज्ञातसुकृत and अज्ञात सुकृत. ज्ञात सुकृत comprises all such acts as tapas, charity, bathing in sacred waters, chanting the divine namas of the Lord and the sacred mantras, pilgrimage and worship performed by us knowingly, for securing the merit claimed by the scriptures for such acts. Over and above these, the Lord in His immeasurable love and unbounded generosity makes credit entries in our individual ledger accounts, for certain acts of ours which proved beneficial to others or could be considered good according to His extra-liberal standards. Otherwise, what would our ledger account look like with the innumerable debit entries, earthbound and worldly-minded that we are? This is what is known as अज्ञात सुकृत. For example, when a pilgrim party passing through a dacoit-infested area was about to be attacked by some bandits, a posse of armed police passed along and the bandits fled away. The mishap that was about to befall the pilgrims was thus averted and the members of the Police force, who were not even aware of the danger, the pilgrims were in, are rewarded by the Lord for having rescued the pilgrims.

To take another example, the owner of a big estate irrigates his land through a channel from a distant waterhead, due to scarcity of water in the vicinity. Some devotees travelling in that region with parched lips and tired limbs refresh themselves in the channel and quench their thirst and offer their heartfelt thanks to the estate-owner, who, however, dug the channel purely for irrigation purposes and not as a piece of charity. The thanks of the devotees are automatically posted by the Omniscient Lord, who keeps account of every little bit, in the personal ledger account of the estate-owner—credit entries without the latter being aware of them. Yet another example shall be that of a wealthy person, who was addicted to gambling. He had built a house to serve exclusively as a gambling den, where he and his associates would gamble every day till late in the night. Thereafter, he would lock it and go home. Certain Sadhus passing along, finding the house locked, used to rest in the verandah for the night. The wealthy man would be given credit for this by the Lord, although the former never intended that kind of benefit for the way-

farers and would not have hesitated to put up iron gratings and render it impossible for others to take shelter in the verandah of the house, if only he had been aware of it.

Earlier in this chapter, it was said to the credit of Rama, that he would not take to heart even if hundreds of injuries had been deliberately inflicted on him. “न सरत्यपकाराणां शतमपि आत्मवत्तया”. In this context, it might be asked why Rama fell foul of Sugreeva, when he failed to turn up after mustering the army, soon after the rainy season was over, as previously instructed. Rama sent Lakshmana to Sugreeva with the following message:—

“What a pity, Oh! Lakshmana. Sugreeva has exceeded the time-limit fixed by me for starting our military operations. An ungrateful person is most despicable and even carnivorous beasts will despise his flesh. How dare Sugreeva allow himself to be immersed in sensual pleasures like this, unmindful of my specific directive? The way Vali went should be fresh in his (Sugreeva's) memory. Tell him that I am ready to despatch him and all his folks to the land of Yama. May I still hope that he would come to his senses and avert such a disaster?”

Was it proper for Rama to indulge in an outburst of this kind? Well, let us move into the story a little further and find out the answer for this question. When irate Rama spoke to Lakshmana, as above, the latter at once decided to finish off Sugreeva, who had not kept up his promise and, therefore, did not deserve to exist. What was Rama's reaction then? He advised Lakshmana not to precipitate any such action in the case of a friend like Sugreeva, but to counsel him into action. Lakshmana would, however, be free to act in the manner originally contemplated by him, if it transpired definitely, that Sugreeva had turned ungrateful. This anecdote, at once illustrates (i) how Rama, though outwardly ruffled, continued to have the same warmth and affection for Sugreeva, notwithstanding the latter's transgression, and (ii) how a really ungrateful person deserves no consideration.

CHAPTER V

5. कः सत्यवाक्यः? (Who is a speaker of truth?)

A सत्यवाक्य is one who always speaks सत्य (truth). And what is सत्य? The universal conception of truth is understanding a thing as it is and passing it on to others in precisely the same manner. This definition does not, however, pass muster in certain quarters, on the ground, that we, human beings

are liable to mistake at times, certain things for certain others, as for instance, when a piece of rope lying about, looks like a serpent—may be out of fright. The person passing on the information about a snake as comprehended by him, although, in fact, there was only a rope, cannot be guilty of untruth, but is only a victim of optical illusion or a sort of hallucination, which is not the same as being untruthful. Looked at from another angle, however, even passing on an information just as one gets to know about it cannot be regarded as bringing out the real content of this great trait (viz) सत्य. It has been enumerated in Vyasa Smriti सत्यं भूतहितं प्रोक्तम्, that is to say, speaking out what you have seen, as beheld by you can constitute 'Satya,' only if it is beneficial to the fellow-beings and not when it proves otherwise. This is corroborated by another oft-quoted edict “सत्यं ब्रूयात् प्रियं ब्रूयात् न ब्रूयात् सत्यमप्रियम् (i. e.) that which is absolutely true cannot be regarded as truth, if it engenders hatred in others. The exponent of the above edict was a great Maharishi, who is revered by all Hindus, No doubt, it runs directly counter to our normal concept of truth. Prosecution witnesses in criminal cases, speaking out the truth, secure the conviction of the accused. Could they (the truth-loving witnesses) be dubbed “untruthful”, merely because their evidence has resulted in the punishment of some persons? It is indeed puzzling and to put it frankly, it is extremely difficult to draw the line between ‘truth’ and the opposite. Therefore it is, it has been said in the Maha Bharatha “धर्मस्य तत्त्वं निहितं गुहायाम्” and in the Ramayana सूक्ष्मः परमदुर्ज्ञेयस्सतां धर्मः प्लवङ्गम ! Let us then proceed to find out what Sri Rama himself has said about सत्यवादित्व or “truthfulness.”

Rama averred before Kaikeyi before going into exile—“रामो द्विर्नाभिभाषते” (18-30-Ayodhyakanda), by way of vindicating his extra-ordinary regard for truth. Rama's tongue can never utter anything in two different ways. Again he addressed Sugreeva as follows:—

“अनृतं नोक्तपूर्वं मे न च वक्ष्ये कदाचन। एतत्ते प्रतिजानामि सत्येनैव शपामि ते”. (4-7-22)
 “Let me state this in the name of truth. I have never spoken a lie nor will I ever do so”. This was repeated to Sugreeva while exhorting him to challenge *Vali* for a duel—“अनृतं नोक्तपूर्वं मे वीर कृच्छ्रेऽपि तिष्ठता” (4-14-14).

While pleading with Kaikeyi to give up her pernicious demand for Rama's banishment, King Dasaratha expatiated, most feelingly, on Rama's sterling qualities. The following is undoubtedly the crowning sloka—

सत्येन लोकाञ्जयति दीनान् दानेन राघवः। गुरुशुश्रूषया वीरो धनुषा युधि शत्रवान्॥ (2-12-22)

Rama could conquer all the worlds by sheer truthfulness, captivate the poor by gifts, and his preceptors by service, while in the battlefield he could easily conquer his enemies through his unrivalled superiority in archery. Our Acharyas have made admirable use of this statement of King Dasaratha, particularly the words “सत्येन लोकाञ्जयति”. One of the Chola Kings was greatly interested in the classics and delved deep into the intricacies of the Ramayana. It was puzzling to him, how Rama, an incarnation of Sriman Narayana, who came into this world with the ostensible purpose of portraying the ideal man, could send Jatayu, the vulture king to Heaven. Isn't it curious that Rama, who was bemoaning the loss of Sita and kept on enquiring of even inanimate beings and members of the sub-human kingdom, like peacocks and jackdaws about the whereabouts of Sita, could address Jatayu, mortally wounded by Ravana in the following words and send him (Jatayu) to Heaven?

“मया त्वं समनुज्ञातो गच्छ लोकान् अनुत्तमान्”.

The Ruler was, however, immensely pleased when this apparently irreconcilable situation was reconciled by his guru, by calling into play those famous lines “सत्येन लोकाञ्जयति”, whose meaning has already been given above. The erudite Ruler readily appreciated this explanation and showered valuable gifts on the Guruji.

While on this subject, it will be interesting to contrast the wailing of Rama soon after Sita's disappearance from Panchavati, with the exuberance displayed by him while agreeing to go into exile:—

“राज्याञ्छो वने वासो नष्टा सीता हतो द्विजः । ईदृशीयं मम अलक्ष्मीर्निर्दहेदपि पावकम् ॥” (3-67-24)

“Alas! I lost the kingdom that was due to me. Even if I could not get a whole kingdom, I might have stayed in some obscure corner of the city. It is my miserable lot to come down to the forest and suffer like this, by the loss of Sita and Jatayu.

Was it the same Rama, who, when asked to go into exile, declared before Lakshmana, राज्यं वा वनवासो वा वनवासो महोदयः ? 2-22-29) (“What does it matter to us, whether it is reign or exile? In fact, it is the latter which is most enjoyable”.) Did he really mean what he said? If not, how can he live up to the reputation of being truthful—रामो द्विर्नाभिभाषते? Why does he now regret having come into the forest? Not only that, why does he feel for the loss of the kingdom, which was legitimately due to him? Does it not indicate that the previous

utterance was just from the tip of the lip, to conceal the grief buried deeper down? This doubt has to be resolved by studying closely the context in which Rama referred to राज्याद्भ्रंशो वने वासः. Was it not after separation from Sita and loss of a great well-wisher like Jatayu? The very object with which he gladly courted exile was slipping off. As explained *in extenso* in chapter III, without Sita, the सहधर्मचरी, the Dharma sought to be put through by Rama while in the forest, viz., of extending protection to those who seek refuge in him, would be difficult to practise. This was indeed, a great disappointment, which became even more poignant when the revered Jatayu, whose company Rama had coveted, passed away. It was thus out of a sense of frustration, resulting from the non-fulfilment of his mission in the forest, that Rama bemoaned his lot, and so it does not, by any means, detract from the sincerity of his earlier statement indicating his positive predilection for वनवास as against राज्य. It is hardly fair to question the veracity of Rama. To bring home the correct position in this regard, let us take the case of a devout pilgrim, who undertakes a pilgrimage to a distant pilgrim centre, with all the fervour at his command, but who, on reaching the same is not able to offer the long-pined for worship, due to local conditions and on top of that, is put to enormous physical inconvenience and privations at the other end. Should we doubt his sincerity or religious fervour, if, out of a sense of frustration he very much repents for his having left his home town and gone all the way on an abortive pilgrimage?

CHAPTER VI

6. कः दृढव्रतः? (Who is steadfast?)

Barring a few, the majority of people find it difficult to put through to a successful conclusion a given undertaking or attain the particular goal or objective set unto themselves. They start off nicely, but half way through, they get bogged down and switch on to something else. There again, the same tale is repeated and the cycle of infructuous endeavours goes on like that, without getting them anywhere. Sri Rama was, however, steadfast and resolute to the core. Let us, therefore, dwell on this admirable trait of his and emulate his example.

What was that inviolable creed of Rama, that is now being talked of? शरणागत परित्राणं was his creed, as already explained at some length in Chapter III. (धर्मज्ञः शरणागत वत्सलः).

“मित्रभावेन संप्राप्तं न त्यजेयं कथंचन । दोषो यद्यपि तस्य स्यात् सतामेतदगर्हितम् ॥” (6-18-3).

“सकृदेव प्रपन्नाय तवास्मीति च याचते । अभयं सर्वभूतेभ्यो ददामि एतत् व्रतं मम ॥” (-do-34).

That Rama was a दृढव्रत is amply brought out by these Slokas of his, known as चरम श्लोक. He gave expression to this creed of his in several contexts and by his exemplary conduct, proved, how he all along worked up to that creed and would not swerve from it under any circumstance.

In Aranya Kanda, Sarga 6, we find that the Rishis of Dandakaranya came forward and saluted Rama as follows:—

“Oh! Rama, we are all admiration for your steadfastness; having given up the immense wealth of a vast kingdom, you would not yield to Bharata's entreaties to get back to Ayodhya and rule. We see in you, the very personification of 'Dharma' and 'Truthfulness'. We are aware that your creed is to go the whole hog out in protecting the oppressed, who seek refuge in you. We, therefore, beseech you to relieve us from the enormous sufferings we are undergoing at the hands of the Rakshasas. We are neither able to endure them nor defend ourselves against the onslaught of the Rakshasas. See our emaciated bodies which bear eloquent testimony to the tortures undergone by us at the hands of the unrelenting Rakshasas, who stalk this forest”.

On hearing this piteous appeal of the Rishis, Rama's heart melted down and he addressed them, saying that the Rishis, far from entreating him as above, should have commanded him to do their bidding. He would certainly quell the Rakshasas; in fact, he had retired to the forest only to fulfil this mission. In the ninth Sarga of the same Kanda, Sita, however, raised a point of order almost challenging this attitude of Rama:—

“Oh, Lord! it is admitted on all hands that telling lies, coveting another's wife and inflicting harm on others without provocation are three heinous offences. So far as the first two of these are concerned, you would not even dream of them. But the third offence is fast creeping into you, as I gather from the talk you had with the Rishis in Dandakaranya, that you would destroy the Rakshasas in order to protect the former and that it is the very purpose of your coming into the forest. It grieves me to think of how you are bent upon killing the Rakshasas, although they have done you no harm and there is no direct enmity between them and you. I wonder whether

this will be in consonance with your ideal of Dharma. If you had at least occupied the throne, it could be justified on the ground that it was your duty to succour the oppressed. May I remind you that you were not merely asked to give up the throne but also lead a stern life of austeriy like a 'Tapasvi'? There is not much for me, a mere female to expatiate on 'Dharma', and that too before you. I would beg of you to ponder over this in consultation with Lakshmana and decide on the future course of action".

Rama's reply to this is found in the tenth Sarga and the crowning sloka therein is :—

अप्यहं जीवितं जह्यां त्वां वा सीते सलक्ष्मणाम् । न तु प्रतिज्ञां संश्रुत्य ब्राह्मणेभ्यो विशेषतः ॥

(Aranyakanda 10-12)

This sloka brings out succinctly the steadfastness of Rama in protecting those who seek his protection. "Oh! Sita, I would rather give up my life and even abandon you and Lakshmana, but never will I go back on a pledge given by me to another and that too to the Brahmins (Rishis)."

A little further down (i. e.) in Sloka, 22, Rama proceeds to say

सदृशं चानुरूपं च कुलस्य तव चात्मनः । सधर्मचारिणी मे त्वं प्राणेभ्योपि गरीयसी ॥

"Sita! you must stand by my pledge and help me to redeem it. Don't you know that it is just for this, that I took you in as my life-partner? May I hope that you, my darling, will identify yourself with me completely and pursue the same ideals as mine?"

The Dharmatma that Vibhishana was, he tried his level best to persuade Ravana to give up his nefarious intentions and restore Sita to Rama. Having failed to evoke any response through his hitopadesha, Vibhishana came away and sought asylum in Rama's camp. Sugreeva and other senior counsellors vehemently opposed Vibhishan's admission, suspecting him, among other things, to be a fifth columnist. Rama prevailed over them by saying that Vibhishan's bonafides need not be questioned and that it would be highly improper on his (Rama's) part to give up, under any circumstance, a person who had sought his protection. Even if admission of Vibhishan into their camp were to result in their defeat, that would any day be preferred to victory secured at Vibhishana's expense (i. e.) by refusing admission to him. Rama would rather prefer death to that kind of victory. A person, who had sought Rama's protection would be looked upon by him as an age-long friend and even if any serious harm resulted therefrom, he will have the immense satisfaction of having responded to the call of a destitute. As a descendant of the famous emperor, Sibi, he would like to emulate his example. Did he not

offer his own flesh in exchange for that of the dove (Yama), which took shelter under him, escaping from the depredation of a Vulture (Indra), when the latter demanded the equivalent in weight for the dove, as the next best to releasing the dove itself? Rama also cited the example of a male dove which offered itself as food to a hunter, who was resting under a tree which was the abode of the dove, notwithstanding the fact that the self-same hunter had captured the female dove. In fact, the male dove was bemoaning the loss of the female, which was at the moment down below in the hunter's net beside him, (the hunter). From inside the net the female dove advised the male dove not to feel for the separation from her, but extend the customary hospitality to the hunter, who must be looked upon as guest. Could Rama now give up Vibhishana, having already declared his creed of Saranagatha Rakshana before the Rishis of Dandakaranya? Yet another episode called into play by Rama on that occasion was that of a hunter, who sought shelter in a monkey perched high up on a tree in a bid to escape from a tiger in hot pursuit. The tiger wouldn't leave the tree, but the monkey would not give up the hunter, who had sought its protection. During the long period of waiting, the monkey fell asleep on the lap of the hunter, who was persuaded by the tiger to drop the monkey down so that he may be let off. The ungrateful hunter at once put his safety above everything else and pushed the monkey down. The tiger, however, pleaded with the monkey saying that he had a special liking for human flesh and that the monkey would be set free, in case it agreed to drop the hunter down instead. The monkey agreed to do so just to escape from the tiger, but to the utter surprise and remorse of the hunter, who had by then begun to sense sure death, having betrayed the monkey, the latter, on climbing up the tree refused to give up the hunter, notwithstanding his infidelity, on the ground that he had already sought its protection, which was duly vouchsafed. It was in this context that the brilliant, love-laden slokas, referred to earlier as Rama Charama Slokas, emerged from Rama's *steadfast lips*.

CHAPTER VII

7. चरित्रेण च को युक्तः ? (Who possesses good conduct?)

What does the word “चरित्र” connote? Broadly, it signifies rectitude and good behaviour, such as obedience born of reverence to elders, devotion to one's parents, due performance of the duties enjoined by the shastras, God-consciousness, desisting from doing harm to others, studiously eschewing the very thought of coveting others' wives and possessions, so on, and so forth. Let us now proceed to see how these qualities were displayed by Rama.

(a) *Obedience to elders*:— Mankind can be classified under three categories (viz.) (i) our superiors (ii) our equals and (iii) our inferiors. The question may be asked whether we have a right to feel that there are at least some, who are inferior to us, instead of practising that great virtue known as humility, by feeling that we are the humblest and the lowest. In the work-a-day world we cannot, however, hold our children, servants etc. superior to us, nay, even as our equals. The three categories do, therefore, subsist in the world of human affairs. Rama scrupulously revered the elders and was a great exemplar in this respect. The first great achievement of Rama was the slaying of that most formidable demon, Thataka. There is no doubt, a shastraic injunction regarding the slaying of women and Rama was jolly well aware of it. Why then did he not show her the concession which he extended to Surpanakha later on and just let her go with the mutilation of an organ or two? Would it not have served the purpose if Thataka had just been chased off to a safe distance, so as not to be an impediment to the Yaga of Viswamitra, instead of killing her outright? On the other hand, if Surpanakha had been slain, she could not have instigated the abduction of Sita by Ravana and unleashed all the misery that followed. Well, all this sounds eloquent and logical too, at this distance of time. But it was Viswamitra's peremptory command to Rama that Thataka should be slain without any qualms and compunction, on the ground that she was after all a woman, and Rama was duty-bound to carry out his behest. Rama's underlying policy is best reflected in his address to the great sage after the successful conclusion of the Yaga (viz.):—

इमौ स मुनिशार्दूल ! किंकरो समुपस्थितौ । आज्ञाप्य यथेष्टं वै शासनं करवाव किम् ॥

"Oh great sage! my brother Lakshmana and I are your humble servants, ever ready to do your bidding. Please do not hesitate to command freely and take service from us". Indeed, these words, coming as they do from the valorous prince of that great clan of Ikshavaku, and that too, after the glorious and super-human achievement to his credit of having slain Thataka, the demon of demons, whose sight frightened no less a person than Viswamitra, and successfully put through the Yaga, keeping off the intruding Rakshasas, mark the very acme of simplicity. This occurs in the first kanda (viz.) Balakanda and taking a quick turn through this great epic, let us examine another situation in the Yudha Kanda, quite stimulating indeed. After Ravana was vanquished and his last rites were got performed by Vibhishana, the latter beseeched Rama to get into Lanka and avail of his humble hospitality before returning to Ayodhya. Rama, who bore immense love towards Vibhishana, however, sternly declined the invitation, saying

न मे स्नानं बहुमतं वस्त्राणि आभरणानि च । तं विना कैकयीपुत्रं भरतं धर्मचारिणम् ॥

“The target date fixed for my return to Ayodhya is fast approaching; my beloved brother, Bharata, will be pining for me every minute. I can, therefore, hardly relish now the idea of a refreshing bath and decorating myself with dainty clothes, ornaments etc. I should hurry back”. Accordingly, Rama sped through air towards Ayodhya, in the conveyance provided by Vibhishana. Sage Bharadwaja, however, accosted Rama *enroute* and insisted upon him to accept his hospitality—*Athithya*—and resume his onward journey only the next day. Rama dared not go against the wishes of the sage and this is extolled in the 127th Sarga of Yudha Kanda. The Ramayana is replete with such instances and the reader will do well to remember such significant phrases as “भरद्वाजस्य शासनात्”, “पितुर्वचन निर्देशात्”, “विश्वामित्रस्य वचनात्”, “अगस्त्यवचनाच्चैव” etc., At this stage, a little doubt might occur whether Rama consistently pursued this policy. When Rama was still in Chitrakot, Sages Vasishta and Jabali visited him along with several others and implored him to get back to Ayodhya and take over the reins of the kingdom. Rama, whose obedience to elders is proverbial, did not, however, accede to their request, as it went against the command of his father, King Dasaratha. This cannot, therefore, be construed as detracting from Rama’s devotion to elders. On the other hand, if he started carrying out the mutually conflicting behests of every elderly person he came across, it would have thrown him into a quandary and made him an object of mockery. Rama, with his profound knowledge of Dharma and its real content and his paramount sense of duty, could never bring himself to do anything in violation of Dharma. He would not, therefore, hesitate to castigate Jabali for his specious arguments. c. f. Bharata’s denunciation of Vasishta. “विल्लाप समामध्ये जगर्हे च पुरोहितम्”

(b) Devotion to parents

True to the Upanishadic command, “मातृदेवो भव”; “पितृदेवो भव”, Rama was very much devoted to his father, King Dasaratha, and his mother Kausalya; he bore even greater love towards Kaikeyi than his own mother and there was not the least little rancour in him, notwithstanding the fact that Kaikeyi was at the bottom of his dethronement and exile. During the exile, Lakshmana would, every now and then, extol Bharata’s many sterling qualities but end up every time with a denunciation of Kaikeyi, wondering how such a wicked one could give birth to a son of Bharata’s excellence. Rama would simply not brook Lakshmana’s attitude towards Kaikeyi and kept on chiding

him. Although Rama would never be tired of listening to Lakshmana's praise of sweet Bharata, yet it did certainly hurt his feelings when Kaikeyi was spoken ill of. Rama, therefore, pointed out to Lakshmana that it was hardly proper for him to speak irreverently of Kaikeyi. This highlights Rama's devotion to his mothers. (मातृभक्ति)

(c) *Adherence to Shastraic code of conduct*

Descending from an illustrious line of kings of the famous Ikshvaku clan, noted for their scrupulous adherence to the Shastras, Rama kept up the tradition very well. His meticulous attention to the vaidic performances has been referred to, in several places.

When, as a mere lad of 12, he accompanied sage Viswamitra to the latter's hermitage, his way lay through dense forests. At night-fall, he would lie down on the open grass bed and sleep. At day-break the sage would wake him up addressing him as follows:—

कौसल्या सुप्रजा राम पूर्वा सन्ध्या प्रवर्तते । उत्तिष्ठ नरशार्दूल ! कर्तव्यं दैवमाह्निकम् ॥

Here the concluding portion “कर्तव्यं दैवमाह्निकम्” deserves special attention. It pointedly refers to the zeal with which Rama was going about the daily rituals such as purificatory bath, Sandhya, Panchamahayagnas etc. c. f. the Lord's utterance in Gita

न मे पार्थास्ति कर्तव्यं त्रिषु लोकेषु किञ्चन । नान्वासमवाप्त्यं वर्त एव च कर्मणि ॥ (3-22)

यदि ह्यहं न वर्तेय जातु कर्मण्यतन्द्रितः । मम वर्त्मानुवर्तन्ते मनुष्याः पार्थ सर्वशः ॥ (3-23)

bringing out His scrupulous adherence to the rites and rituals enjoined by the Shastras. It is seen from the concluding sloka of the 5th Sarga in Yudha Kanda that even when Rama was deeply afflicted by the abduction of Sita, he would not be unmindful of his religious functions and performed Sandhya regularly—

“आध्वासितो लक्ष्मणेन राम सन्ध्यामुपासत । सरन् कमलपत्राक्षीम् सीतां शोकाकुलीकृतः ॥”

Bharata espied the smoke coming up from an Ashram in Chitrakoot and could infer, even from a distance, that it should be the dwelling place of Rama, smoke being easily attributed to the daily rituals of Rama in the sacramental fire. In fact, Lakshmana suspecting, in the first instance, the bonafides of Bharata, even advised Rama to extinguish the sacramental fire, lest the smoke arising therefrom with its long trail in the skies should provide the clue to Bharata, regarding Rama's dwelling place:—“अग्निं संशमयतु आर्यः” c. f. the modern idea of ‘black-out’.

(d) *Piety (God-consciousness)*

Rama, the virtuous man, did not lag behind others in regard to divine worship. Lord Ranganatha, now enshrined at Srirangam, was worshipped by the kings of Ikshvaku dynasty including Rama, who gifted away the idol along with the Pranavakara Vimana (Canopy having the shape of 'Pranava' (i.e.) Aum, to Vibhishana at the time of the coronation—

“ लब्ध्वा कुलधनं राजा लङ्कां प्रायद्विभीषणः ” (Yudha Kanda 131-90)

(e) *Desisting from doing harm to others*

Rama has, *inter alia*, been acclaimed by his subjects for the tenderness with which he identified himself with the sufferings of others. “ व्यसनेषु मनुष्याणां भृशं भवति दुःखितः ”

To quote but one instance of his magnanimity let us take the episode, in the 20th Sarga of Yudha Kanda, relating to Suka and Sarana, two of Ravana's cleverest couriers, who were set upon by Ravana to pry into Rama's camp and bring valuable information regarding the size of Rama's army, the strength and skill of his counsellors. etc. As the couriers were moving about in the guise of two small monkeys, Vibhishana could spot them out. They were bound hand and foot and produced before Rama, who, however, graciously ordered their release, despite Vibhishana's express wish that they should be slain.

(f) *Conjugal rectitude*

Ram's fidelity and his single-minded devotion to his wife have been extolled by Sita herself and no greater proof is, therefore, needed to bring home this point (9th Sarga of Aranya Kanda). (See also Chapter VI)

CHAPTER VIII

8. सर्वभूतेषु को हितः ? (Who is the well-wisher of all ?)

Anything that is pleasing to you for the time being is known in common parlance as 'प्रियम्'. This very source of happiness might land you into difficult and unenviable predicaments later on and might adversely affect you in several ways. Well then, anybody, be he a preceptor, friend or one's own father, who sounds a note of warning well in time and cautions you against the possible ill-effects of courting the so-called happiness, is said to counsel हितम्. The said warning might not be palatable and can be appreciated only when you ultimately reap the benefit thereof and derive happiness far more enduring than the one in the first category, which is but misery, disguised in

the alluring garb of happiness. Against this background, you can now easily distinguish between प्रिय and हित. Your mother is all love for you and is all out to cater to all your needs without caring to analyse them, their effect on you, physically, mentally and morally. Later on, when you suffer from the after-effects of such indulgence, the doting mother wails along with you. On the other hand, your father reacts very differently to your needs; he carefully weighs and analyses each and every situation and does whatever will ultimately prove beneficial to you and enhance your stature in life. He may appear to be harsh and unrelenting for the time being, perhaps, in dire contrast to the mother's attitude and behaviour.

Rama is said to be grace personified – Karuna Kakuthstha – one who would be readily moved by the sufferings of others. He was exceedingly considerate to one and all, although he judged himself by the strictest standards. And yet he was stern to the evil-doers and dealt with them suitably, without however, being vindictive. Any punishment inflicted by him on the evil-doer was directed towards the latter's uplift and advancement. Viewed in this light, his anger towards Sugriva, who failed to turn up, after the rains were over, for searching out Sita, was admittedly हित designed to save him from the bottomless perdition to which he was consigning himself, immersed in sensual pleasures and forgetting the simple and unforgettable fact that all that enjoyment was rendered possible only by the slaying of Vali by Rama.

Rama's attitude towards Sita, just after the overthrow of Ravana and his (Rama's) stern insistence on her passing through a fire-bath in vindication of her purity, is another instance in point.

The Lord of the universe, in His supreme wisdom, knows what is good for us and when. The shastras proclaim – “हरिर्दुःखानि भक्तेभ्यो हितबुद्ध्या कराति वै” that is, whatever suffering is visited on them, the devotees of Bhagawan Hari take it as a piece of His benefaction, as they have immense faith in Him and feel assured that the sufferings are the purgatories through which they ultimately attain to a state of bliss and beatitude. The underlying mercy or the *Hita Bhava* of the Lord is never, for a moment, lost sight of by them.

CHAPTER IX

कः विद्वान् ? (Who is learned ?)

A विद्वान् (Vidwan) is one, who is fully conversant with several shastras. Narada Bhagavan describes this aspect of Rama to Sree Valmiki in the following sloka of the opening sarga.—

वेदवेदाङ्गतत्त्वज्ञः धनुर्वेदे च निष्ठितः । सर्वशास्त्रार्थतत्त्वज्ञः स्मृतिमान् प्रतिभानवान् ॥

Rama was fully conversant with the four vedas (Rig, Yajur, Sama and Atharva) and the six adjuncts (शिक्षा, व्याकरण, छन्दस्, निरुक्त, ज्योतिष and कल्प known as Vedangas). Besides mastering the science of archery, he acquired a profound knowledge of the various shastras, endowed as he was, with great retentive memory and precocity. He studied under that most eminent sage Vasishta and became a विद्वान् (Vidwan) at a very young age.

In the 'Adi Kavya' (first poetry) of Valmiki, where Rama has been generally portrayed as a valorous prince, perfect in virtue, in certain places, he has, nevertheless, been referred to as an incarnation of Lord Maha Vishnu. For instance, when king Dasaratha performed a yaga for propitiating the Gods and securing a son, the Devatas held a conclave to discuss and devise the ways and means of ridding themselves from the tyranny of Ravana. Maha Vishnu is stated to have appeared then before them and promised succour: एतस्मिन्नन्तरे विष्णुरुपयातो महाद्युतिः ।

As a sequel to this, the Lord came down to earth as Rama, the valiant and virtuous prince. This is referred to in the first sarga of Ayodhya Kanda as:—

स हि देवैरुदीर्णस्य रावणस्य वधार्थिभिः । अर्थितो मानुषे लोके जज्ञे विष्णुः सनातनः ॥ (2-1-7)

Again, after the overthrow of Ravana, it was insisted by Rama that Sita should pass through a fire-bath in order to vindicate her purity, having stayed in Ravana Bhavan for quite some length of time. This almost provoked the Devatas, who came in a body and reminded Rama, in the following terms, that, as the omniscient Lord-incarnate, there should be no room for doubt in His mind about Sita's purity, Sita being none other than the incarnation of Goddess Lakshmi—

कर्ता सर्वस्य लोकस्य श्रेष्ठो ज्ञानवतां वरः ।

उपेक्षसे कथं सीतां पतन्तीं हव्यवाहने ॥

कथं देवगणश्रेष्ठमात्मानं नावबुध्यसे ।

(6-120-6/7)

Sharp came the retort from Rama that his course of conduct was conditioned by the fact that he was portraying a mere man, the son of king Dasaratha and that other extraneous considerations should not be called into play.

आत्मानं मानुषं मन्ये रामं दशरथात्मजम्. (6-120-11)

It is, in this particular context, that we have to study the answer to the question “कः विद्वान् ?” discussed in this chapter. Otherwise, it will be rather superfluous to examine the विद्वत्ता of the Omniscient Lord.

The word “विद्वान्” is, *inter alia*, interpreted as “विद्वान् विपश्चित् दोषज्ञः” in Amara Kosa. He is a Vidwan, who can comprehend the flaws. In fact, when one pundit shows his composition to another Pundit, the latter invariably focusses his attention on finding out the flaws therein, rather than appreciating the good points. Rama was, however, an entirely different type of Vidwan—one who would go the whole hog out to discern all the good points, the merits rather than the demerits. In one sense, Rama also fitted in with the definition given in Amarakosa. When Vibhishana sought asylum in Rama's camp and appealed passionately from his parlous position in mid-air

“निवेद्यत'मां क्षिप्रं विभीषणमुपस्थितम् । सर्वलोकशरण्याय राघवाय महात्मने ॥ ,

there was a heated discussion among Rama's camp-followers. While all, except Hanuman, vehemently opposed Vibhishana's admission, Hanuman, alone favoured its. There were thus two sides for the question, based on two widely differing view points, namely, (1) Vibhishana is a Rakshasa and is, therefore, unacceptable and (2) he has none of the viles and vices of a Rakshasa and may, therefore, be safely admitted. The average student of Ramayana believes that Rama admitted Vibhishana acting on the second of the two view points mentioned above. The truth, however, is that Rama, as a very eminent Vidwan, viewed the situation from yet another angle, namely, Vibhishana should be admitted even if he were really as bad as was made out by the majority, and there lies the key to Rama's grace and munificence. c.f. दोषो यद्यपि तस्य स्यात् in Rama Charama Sloka (6-18-3). Sree Vedanta Desika, a veritable lion among poets and logicians, brings out this aspect by interpreting the above Sloka as “दोषः तस्य स्यात्”, that is, he, who is full of flaws, becomes a fit subject for Rama's benevolent attention, leaving aside the word यद्यपि as mere poetic embellishment to be skipped over; otherwise, there is no scope for the exercise of that lovely trait of his, namely, करुणा (Grace). It would not be, therefore, incorrect to say that Rama was always on the look out for a दोषवान्, on whom he could bestow his grace, and thus answered to the said description of 'Vidwan', given in Amara Kosa विद्वान् विपश्चित् दोषज्ञः.

CHAPTER X

कः समर्थः ? (Who is sagacious ?)

A Samartha is one who can put through things all right and achieve his ends. One is naturally a little puzzled at the above question coming on the heels of the one discussed in the previous chapter, namely “कः विद्वान् ?”. But does it always follow that a Vidwan with his overwhelming knowledge of the Shastras etc., will apply such knowledge correctly and successfully to the practical day-to-day problems and achieve the odds and ends of life? Knowledge and achievement do not necessarily go hand in hand, as illustrated below. *Vidwatha* (knowledge) and *Samarthya* (capacity to put through things) are, therefore, two different aspects and there is thus no overlapping; the latter calls for tact, pluck and diligence, resourcefulness, etc., which the great Vidwans figuring in the following story were found to lack miserably.

Once, a very eminent scholar, who was also an Acharya (Guru) with a great following, set out on a country-wide tour along with four other scholars. On reaching Calcutta, the Acharya sent one of the scholars in his entourage to inform one of his disciples, a big Sait (merchant) of the place, about his arrival. When the scholar-messenger met the merchant and was face to face with him, the former kept staring at the latter for some length of time without giving out the purpose of his visit. Provoked by this strange behaviour of the visitor, the merchant broke into a volley of questions regarding the mute visitor, the object of his visit etc. Without, however, broaching the subject proper, the scholar wished to know, at the outset, how the merchant, a man of generous dimensions, could enter the house through the narrow outer gate and without even waiting for an answer, displayed his superior wisdom by suggesting that he should have got into the house first and the outer gate constructed thereafter and demanded confirmation. Little wonder, the merchant got angry and ordered his servants to lock the visitor up, in one of the rooms. Finding that his emissary had not come back even after the lapse of a considerable time, the Acharya sent another of his camp followers, a great scholar in his own right, on the same mission as his predecessor and it turned out that he fared no better. On reaching the mansion, he got to know about the impudence exhibited by his fellow-scholar and the fate that befell him. The new-comer started well and briskly by apologising for the indiscretion of his companion, but soon landed himself into difficulty, by telling the merchant that, rightly or wrongly, having entered the house, there was currently no need to enquire as to how he got inside the house and what really mattered was how his body would be got out of the house when he happened to die.

This exasperated the merchant even more and he ordered the same treatment to be meted out for the second scholar, as the first. After waiting for quite some time, the Acharya got perplexed and sent a third scholar, who, in trying to excel the two others, who had gone before him, only drew forth further ire from the Sait. The visitor, dubbing the first two as veritable fools, declared with some gusto that for his part, he had no such problem as to how the Sait's dead body would be expelled from the house, as, according to him, the solution was very simple and only the walls had to be demolished, when such a contingency arose. Need it be said, that, when the Acharya's patience was exhausted by the non-arrival of the third scholar also, the fourth one was sent? The fourth one, however, fared worst of all. While condemning the other three for their indiscretion amounting to *unpardonable* insolence, he asserted his superior intelligence by stating that there was hardly any need for demolishing the walls to get the Sait's dead body out and the simpler and less expensive method would be to dissect the body into pieces of the required size and contain them in a basket which could easily pass through the outer gate. All the four scholars were thus shut up by the Sait, to be dealt with suitably, and thus the Acharya was compelled to go and see things for himself. Even the great Acharya faltered and, disagreeing with the other scholars, he exclaimed that, after the Sait's death, there was hardly any need for the mansion. There was, therefore, no question of the walls being demolished and the rest of the building being left *intact*. The solution according to the great Acharya lay in setting fire to the building itself with the dead body inside. This sent the Sait aghast and what would have been a glorious reception from the munificent and religious Sait for the great Acharya and his camp-followers, thus turned out to be a very pathetic affair indeed.

Let us now examine the practical sagacity of Rama, the वेदवेदाङ्ग तत्त्वज्ञ (Veda Vedanga tatwajna) and where exactly he stands in regard to this particular aspect. There are indeed quite a few things, which raise doubts in the minds of the superficial readers regarding the wisdom and farsightendness of Rama. For instance, it is believed that Rama befriended Sugriva only to seek his help in slaying Ravana. Would it not have been far better and much wiser on the part of Rama to have sought the help of the powerful Vali before whom Ravana was a mere play-thing? Vali's brother Sugreeva was hiding himself in Rishyamuka in mortal fear of Vali and was it not a tactical blunder of Rama to have slain Vali and befriended Sugriva, the weakling? The real truth about it is that Rama hardly needed the help of Vali or any body else, for the matter of that, to slay Ravana. Did not Rama vanquish the formidable Parasurama, who was a terror to the kshatriyas as a class and who

among a host of others, slew the powerful Kartha veerya Arjuna, the great warrior with a thousand shoulders? Ravana fared very badly before Kartha veerya Arjuna and was subdued and humbled by him. Although Rama played the man, here and there, during his long stay in this human abode, he came out of his cell and revealed the superhuman in him. One such occasion was when Vibhishana's admission into Rama's camp was debated upon. When the opposition grew vehement, mainly on the score that Vibhishana's entry would jeopardise their chances of victory over Ravana, Rama could hardly contain himself and burst into an effective denunciation of their fears about Ravana, saying that he (Rama) could just crush, with his little finger's tip, Ravana and the whole brood of Rakshasas. Rama's alliance with Sugriva and slaying of Vali have, therefore, to be interpreted and understood as follows:—

It was Rama's creed to succour the oppressed and the destitute Sugriva, who had been victimised by the powerful despot of an elder brother (Vali), thus became entitled to the help of Rama, the दीनदयालु (Deena-dayalu) or दीनबन्धु (Deena-bandhu). The slaying of Vali, who was guilty of having unjustly maltreated his younger brother and oppressed him in more ways than one, stands on a different footing altogether and falls within the scope of Rama's creed of *Vinasaya cha dushkritham* (विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम्). We will revert to this topic in greater detail, in another chapter, where the rationale behind the killing of Vali is brought out succinctly.

Again, when you study the episode relating to Rama's supplication to the king of the ocean for crossing it, it sounds rather crazy and detracts from your regard for Rama's practical sagacity. Rama, as a man of action, should not have resorted to such passive methods of doubtful utility. In fact, after three days of prostration before the ocean, on a bare floor, there was no inkling of response from the king of the ocean and this infuriated Rama (समुद्रस्य ततः क्रुद्धः) and, while commanding Lakshmana to fetch the bow so that he might dry up the ocean with just an arrow, he (Rama) gave expression to the feeling “असमर्थं विजानाति मामयं मकरालयः”, that is, “this ocean does not realise that it is just a fishpond; on the other hand, it looks down upon me as a helpless fool”.

Thereupon the king of the seas appeared before Rama, trembling with fright, and begged his pardon. Rama gracefully pardoned him and the missile already aimed from his bow changed its target at his command and des-

troyed the enemies of the Samudra Raja in the distant marukanthara. While the finale of the episode thus demonstrated, beyond doubt, the सामर्थ्य of Rama, the question still remains to be answered, as to why he should have, at all, resorted to an invocation of the king of the ocean and surrendered himself to his grace, which was certainly not becoming of a Samartha (समर्थ), in general and much less, one of Rama's calibre and equipment. Probing into this, therefore, we get at the fact that this episode is only meant to illustrate that great trait of Rama, dealt with at some length in chapter III (viz,) शरणागत वात्सल्य. On reaching the northern shore of the Indian ocean, the question arose as to how the ocean could be crossed in order to reach Lanka. Just then, Vibhishana, whose words of wisdom, advice and appeal to Ravana had fallen on deaf ears, came away from Lanka and sought asylum in Rama's camp. After the admission of Vibhishana by Rama into his camp, an act of grace galore, Rama evinced such great love for the new votary, Vibhishana, that the latter's advice was sought for crossing the ocean in preference to the doyens like Jambavan and Hanuman. Vibhishana, who had successfully resorted to 'शरणागति' only a little while ago, had no hesitation in suggesting the same course to Rama, forgetting, for a moment, the difference between himself and Rama. Knowing full well that this method would not fill his bill, Rama still acted on Vibhishana's advice, firstly to vindicate the enormity of his love for Vibhishana, secondly to demonstrate to the world that it would be futile for a Samartha (समर्थ) to follow the course ordinarily followed by an Asamartha (असमर्थ) and thirdly to show that दण्ड should be used only after the other three means (*upayas*), (viz) sama, dana and bheda have been exhausted.

Let us conclude this interesting chapter by citing below a simple story revealing how a confirmed athiest came to realise the supreme wisdom of God. The athiest in the story sustained himself for quite a long time in the belief that whatever existed came of its own accord and that there was hardly any need to think in terms of a creator. Certain incidents which happened in quick succession, however, shocked him into a sort of revelation, which set his thoughts on the possible existence of a superior power, which controlled the movements of men and things and made things happen in a particular manner. He shook off his mental reservation and started looking into things around, with an open mind, to explore the existence of that great power, whose hand he had just seen, faintly though. When he, however, found huge pumpkins sticking to the slender chords of the creepers and huge banian trees having tiny little fruits, he began to entertain doubts about the sagacity of the

so-called Creator. Thinking on these lines, he was resting under a huge banian tree and very soon he fell asleep. When he woke up, he found a number of banian fruits all over his body and, in a trice, he realised how badly he would have been injured if the fruits were really as big as he wished them to be, considering the enormous size of the trees. He at once admired the wisdom of the Creator, who intended the huge banian tree to be a resting place for the weary travellers and, therefore, kept the fruits down to that harmless little size. He could also appreciate how the strain of the pumpkins was borne by Mother Earth, who meekly puts up with the huge burden, human as well as sub-human and inanimate beings, and admired the unique governance of His vast kingdom by an invisible God.

CHAPTER XI

एकप्रियदर्शनः कः ? (Who is of charming looks?)

Who is he with such exquisite charm and beauty that makes one fix one's gaze on him days on end, without satiety? There are indeed some handsome persons, on whom you feel like casting your looks quite often, others of a higher degree of charm, whom you keep on gazing at for some length of time after which you feel stale and satiated, but there is none comparable with Rama, whose enchanting beauty is ever fresh and keeps your eyes rivetted on to him all the time. The word 'Rama', derived from 'रमयति' (Ramayathi) means one with bewitching physical charm, which makes the beholder revel in it. When king Dasaratha intended to make Rama, a Yuvaraja, Rama was sent for and this is how Dasaratha felt as Rama was coming along to meet him:

चन्द्रकान्ताननं राममतीव प्रियदर्शनम् ।

रूपौदार्यगुणैः पुंसां दृष्टिचित्तापहारिणम् ॥

न ततर्प समायान्तं पश्यमानो नराधिपः ॥ (Ayodhya Kanda 3/29-30)

Some might interpret the expression 'चन्द्रकान्ताननं' as "having a face as charming as the moon". Valmiki, who had his own question 'कश्चैकप्रियदर्शनः ?' in view, really meant to say that Rama's charm excelled the moon's. The phrase "अतीव प्रियदर्शनम्" brings out this clearly. Over and above this, there is "रूपौदार्यगुणैः पुंसां दृष्टिचित्तापहारिणम्". Rama's beauty was of such a high order as to steal away not only men's looks but also their hearts. It is a matter of common knowledge that the physical attraction is normally between opposite sexes and not between members of the same sex. If,

however, a male's physical features entice away other males, as in the case of Rama, it is indeed something extra-ordinary; c. f. Draupadi, who is described in Mahabharata as of such ravishing beauty as to make other women feel and regret that they had not been born males, so as to be in a position to appreciate that beauty fully. Saint Kulasekhara, in his overwhelming love and devotion to Rama, steps into King Dasarath's shoes and beckons Rama, about to go into exile, to his presence, just to have one last look at him and, after staring at him for some time, permits him to go, enjoys his beauty from its dorsal aspect, asks him to come again and repeats the process, unable to contain himself. This fully brings out the meaning of “ न तर्प समायान्तं पश्यमानो नराधिपः ” in the sloka quoted above.

Sage Viswamitra wakes up Rama at day-break so as to enable him to go through his daily rituals at the appropriate hour. Why does he address him as “ कौसल्यासुप्रजा राम ” in this context? How is Kausalya in the picture at this stage? The great Acharyas interpret this, in their own unique fashion, as the bewitching effect of Rama, in repose, on the sage, who could not help admiring Kausalya's great good fortune in owning a son of such exquisite beauty.

The women-folk of Mithila, it is mentioned by Kamban, the poet, in his inimitable style, who watched the marriage procession of the bridal pair, could hardly see the entire person of Rama—not that he was not fully visible, but those who saw Rama's shoulders got lost in admiration thereof and could hardly turn their attention elsewhere; likewise, those who beheld his lotus-feet were so much absorbed in their comely contours that they kept on seeing the feet alone; the plight of those whose eyes met the sinewy arms of Rama was just the same. None of them could, therefore, see the whole of Rama's enthralling form, from head to foot.

Did those in the jungles lag behind, in their admiration of Rama's charming personality? Not at all, is the emphatic answer of Valmiki. The following is the crowning sloka in this respect:—

रूपसंहननं लक्ष्मीं सौकुमार्यं सुवेषताम् । ददृशुर्विस्मिताकारा रामस्य वनवासिनः ॥ (3-1-13)

वनचारिणः is another reading. That would be an even more eloquent tribute to Rama's beauty, which attracted not merely the jungle folks but also the animals in the jungles. Love-lorn Surpanakha, with her nose smitten and ear-lobes cut off by Lakshmana, when interrogated by her irate brother Khara as to whose mischief it was, goes on describing the beauty of Rama, as follows:—

तरुणौ रूपसंपन्नौ सुकुमारौ महाबलौ । पुण्डरीकविशालाक्षौ चीरकृष्णाजिनाम्बरी ॥ (3-19-14)

गन्धर्वराजप्रतिमौ पार्थिवव्यञ्जनान्वितौ ॥ (3-19-16)

Even Vali, in his last moments, sings the praise of Rama's peerless beauty as something beyond the ken of art, incapable of reproduction on the canvas even by the most skilful artist. Let us enjoy, in passing, how Hanuman, a nyshtika Brahmachari, felt attracted by the physical charm and prowess of Rama on seeing whom he queried, as follows:—

आयताश्च सुवृत्ताश्च बाहवः परिघोपमाः । सर्वभूषणभूषार्हाः किमर्थं न विभूषिताः ? (4-3-14/15)

Hanuman very much wished that Rama's shoulders should have been adorned, rather covered with jewels, so that they may not be exposed to the public view and suffer from the ill-effects of the proverbial evil eye.

Passing on to Sita, bemoaning her lot in the Asoka Vana, we find her recapitulating Rama's charming personality, his lustrous eyes and his majestic gait, in the following sloka—

तं पद्मदलपत्राक्षं सिंहविक्रान्तगामिनम् । धन्याः पश्यन्ति मे नाथं कृतज्ञं प्रियवादिनम् ॥ (5-25-16)

(पद्मदलपत्राक्षं means eyes like the lotus flower and body like the lotus leaf—पद्मपत्राक्षं, पद्मदलाक्षं)—अक्षं means eye as well as body – अक्षपिन्द्रियकाययोः.

Well, the word एकप्रियदर्शनः is capable of another interpretation also, namely, Rama's seeing others does immense good to them and indeed a beautiful shift from "objective" to "subjective". c. f,

यश्च रामं न पश्येत्तु यं च रामो न पश्यति । निन्दितः सर्वलोकेषु स्वात्माप्येनं विगर्हते ॥ (2-17-14)

He, who has not seen Rama, as well as he, who has not been seen by Rama, will be liable to public reproach; apart from the public reproach, such a person should reproach himself. Rama's benevolent aspect of others is brought out even more vividly in the following words of Sabari—

“ चक्षुषा तव सौम्येन पूतास्मि रघुनन्दन ” (3-74-13)

“ Rama! the moment you cast your looks on me, I have been sanctified completely.”

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CHAPTER XII

आत्मवान् कः ? Who is an Atmavan ?

According to the kosa, “ आत्मा जीवे धृतौ देहे स्वभावे परमात्मनि ”, the Sanskrit word “ आत्मा ” denotes (i) जीव (Jeevatma) (ii) धृति (Bravery) (iii) देह (Body) (iv) स्वभाव (Nature) and (v) परमात्मा (Paramatma). आत्मवान् would mean either a Jeevatma, or one having Jeevatmas under him. Lord Sreeman Narayana, who is the supreme Master of all the teeming millions of Jeeva Rasis, desired that King Dasaratha should be His father (पितरं रोचयामास) and accordingly assumed a human form just like a Jeevatma and passed off as such. “ आत्मानं मानुषं मन्ये रामं दशरथात्मजम् ”. Instead of being served by all, as the supreme Master (परमात्मा), Rama, in human form, served like Jeevatma. Sage Viswamitra could persuade King Dasaratha to send Rama and Lakshmana, mere lads of twelve, along with him on the blood-curdling mission of encountering the formidable Thataka and her crafty sons, after inspiring in the King, the necessary confidence, by revealing that Rama was none other than the Lord— “ अहं वेद्मि महात्मानं रामं सत्यपराक्रमम् ” etc. Rama, however, imported into this mission of Viswamitra, a different meaning altogether. Viswamitra had performed several Yagas before, but he never sought anybody's help. The present Yaga, for which he wanted the help of Rama, was a very brief one as compared to the previous ones, lasting for just six days; it was obviously the desire of the sage, that Rama should demonstrate to the world, through this episode, that he was not meant only to be served, but would also serve others. Rama fulfilled this role all right, by giving expression to the following sentiment after helping Viswamitra put through the Yaga successfully:—

इमौ स मुनिशार्दूल किंकरौ समुपस्थितौ । आज्ञापय यथेष्टं वै शासनं करवाव किम् ॥

(meaning given for this sloka in Chapter I). It is worthwhile studying the implication of the word किंकरः – one, who not merely serves, but is always keen on serving more and more and yearning for service. It also denotes one, who evokes the admiration of his master and keeps him praising the service rendered. Rama wanted that this great trait of his should be highlighted and that is why he made sage Viswamitra go all the way to Ayodhya and seek his help.

Of the five meanings of आत्मा given at the outset, the second is धृति or bravery. Rama was firm and undaunted and had the requisite mental strength and resolve to realise his ideals. Ramayana is replete with instances to prove

this. Let us just take up one such, namely, the situation immediately preceding Vibhishana's admission into Rama's camp. Despised and literally driven out by Ravana, Vibhishana sought asylum in Rama's Camp. "त्यक्त्वा पुत्रांश्च दारांश्च राघवं शरणं गतः" (6-17-16). In the teeth of vehement opposition from Sugreeva and several other veterans in Rama's camp, who suspected Vibhishana's *bonafides*, Rama firmly declared that he would, under no circumstance, fail to vouchsafe protection to Vibhishana. When Sugreeva renewed his opposition to this move of Rama, even Lakhmana joined issues with Sugreeva, marshalling the arguments against Vibhishana's entry into their camp—

एवमुक्तस्तु रामेण सुग्रीवः सहलक्ष्मणः । उत्थायेदं महाप्राज्ञः प्रणतो वाक्यमब्रवीत् ॥ (6-18-16)

No doubt, Rama was quite alive to his obligations to the devout votaries in his camp, but at the same time, he was too firm to give up his creed of शरणागत परित्राण. He, therefore, vindicated his stand, by pointing out, that he could destroy the rank and file of the Rakshasas by a mere *sankalpa*, that is, by just wishing, for once, that they should perish and that there was little or no scope, whatsoever, for their apprehensions about Vibhishana. Here is a supreme example of his brave and undaunted spirits which enabled him to stick to his ideals with a tenacity, which answers to the description of धृति.

The third meaning of the word आत्मा is देह, that is, one having a body. Does the question "who is the one having a body?" make any sense in a world, where all living beings have bodies? The idea behind this question of Valmiki is the one brought out in Chapter XI, namely, the excellence of Rama's enthralling form, which could steal the hearts of even males—"पुंसां दृष्टिचिता पहारिणम्." Unlike us, who secure our bodies according to the merits earned by us by dint of our actions, Rama assumed a form at his own volition and came into our midst—इच्छागृहीत—अभिमतोरुदेहः, as stated by sage Parasara.

The fourth meaning attributed to आत्मा, namely, स्वभाव, brings out Rama's natural inclination to subordinate his interests to those of his votaries.

c. f. भरतस्य वचः कुर्वन् याचमानस्य राघव । आत्मानं नातिवर्तेथाः सत्यधर्मपराक्रम ॥ (2-11-7)

At Chitrakoot, Bharata implored Rama to get back to Ayodhya and take over the reins of the kingdom, but Rama sternly declined the offer. Thereupon, sage Vasishta sounded a warning to Rama, as above. "आत्मानं नातिवर्तेथाः" Do not lose your natural trait of responding to the request of those, who are devoted to you, by refusing to comply with Bharata's request". Losing his own indi-

viduality and merging with the interests of his devotees constituted the natural inclination of Rama. The slaying of Vali by Rama, acting on the version of Kabandha, from his exalted position in the heavenly *Vimana*, after his liberation by Rama, is another instance in point. Granting that Vali deserved to be slain by reason of his mis-deeds, would it not be necessary for Rama, to give the accused a fair hearing, before meting out the punishment? Well, here is Kabandha back again in his former glory, duly sanctified by Rama, and in his heaven-ward flight. From this exalted position, he not merely gives his version of Sugreeva's good nature and Vali's evil nature and tyranny over the former, but also beseeches Rama to befriend and succour Sugreeva. Rama's faith in the regenerated Kabandha is so great, that he looked upon Sugreeva from that moment, as a devotee of a high order and slew Vali straightaway, without any further enquiry. According to Rama, no such enquiry was necessary, as no better testimony or evidence of Vali's guilt was needed than the one furnished by Kabandha, whom the divine *Vimana* bore to heaven.

The fifth and the last meaning imparted to the word आत्मा, namely, परमात्मा, in so far as it is applied to Rama, is brought out by the sloka—

सहि देवैरुदीर्णस्य रावणस्य वधार्थिभिः । अर्थितो मानुषे लोके जज्ञे विष्णुस्सनातनः ॥ (2-1-7)

Lord Vishnu came down to earth at the request of the Devas and naturally retained His divine quality, although His motto, as such, was “आत्मानं मानुषं मन्ये रामं दशरथात्मजम्”—a mere man, son of Dasaratha. c. f. (Bhagavad Gita sloka 4-6)

अजोऽपि सन्नव्ययात्मा भूतानामीश्वरोऽपि सन् । प्रकृतिं स्वामधिष्ठाय सम्बाम्यात्ममायया ॥

Here is Lord Krishna's own version that He retains His quality as *Paramatma*, during his Avatars (Incarnations).

In Janasthana, Rama vanquished the whole lot of Rakshasas, numbering as many as fourteen thousand, single-handed and in an amazingly short period. Does this not bring out the *Paramatma Bhava* in him?



CHAPTER XIII

कः द्युतिमान्? (Who is resplendent?)

कः द्युतिमान्? - This question is the 14th in the series of questions put by Valmiki to Narada, referred to in chapter I, and should normally have been dealt with in the fourteenth chapter of this book. In other words, the thirteenth chapter should have been allotted to the thirteenth question, namely, को जितक्रोधः? (who is he that has conquered anger?) This departure from the arrangement contemplated at the outset is, however, necessitated by the fact that there is a *prima facie* inconsistency between this and the last and sixteenth question in the series, namely, “कस्य बिभ्यति देवाश्च जातरोषस्य संयुगे?” (who is he, whose anger in the battlefield makes even the Devas tremble?) It is now proposed to deal with both these questions together in the last chapter (fifteenth).

‘द्युति’ means brightness or resplendence. The sun is resplendent and has a special halo; the gem is dazzling. Rama is referred to as a ‘sun’ in Sundara Kanda (राम दिवाकरः). The great devotees of Rama refer to him as a lustrous gem. The sun and the gem would appear to owe their greatness or importance to the lustre emanating from each. This brings in the प्रभा - प्रभावान् principle. In this context, it is indeed quite interesting to study the inter-relation between Rama and Sita. In the course of her hitopadesa to Ravana, Sita refers to herself as “अनन्या राघवेणाहं भास्करेण प्रभा यथा” (5-21-16), meaning thereby that she is unto Rama what brightness is unto Sun. It appropriately suggests their indivisibility. Once Rama also spoke in identical terms:- अनन्या हि मया सीता भास्करेण प्रभा यथा। Although, according to the historical part of the Kavya, Rama is stated to have got himself separated from Sita every now and then and the final separation came off on the third occasion, they (Rama and Sita) constitute two inseparable principles (Tatwas). Even when the Lord incarnated as ‘Vamana’ and appeared as a short-statured bachelor, Sree Maha Lakshmi, the नित्यानपायिनी—the puranas say—did not get dislodged from the Lord’s chest, her perpetual residence. Sree Vamanamurthi hid her underneath the deer skin, which the brahmacharis wear along with the sacred thread: “कृष्णाजिनेन संवृण्वन् श्रियं वक्षस्थलस्थिताम्”. Well then, the question might be asked, as to why (i) Rama went to Mithila to marry Sita, (ii) Sita is said to have been abducted at Panchavati by Ravana and (iii) Rama bemoaned his lot.

This apparent inconsistency can be resolved if we study Ramayana from two distinct angles. It is claimed that this great Kavya, composed by Valmiki with the blessings of Brahma and personal instructions received from Narada, does not and cannot contain the slightest inaccuracy or untruthful statement—न ते वाक् अनृता काव्ये काचित् अत्र भविष्यति. In the *Ithihasa* the story is being told of the Lord portraying the man as Rama, the son of King Dasaratha, according to his own Sankalpa, as brought out by the statement, “आत्मानं मानुषं मन्ये रामं दशरथात्मजम्”.

The inter-relation of Rama and Sita has already been succinctly brought out in chapter III (कः धर्मज्ञः?). This particular trait of Rama, namely, his resplendence may be studied in relation to the lustre shed on him by Sita, or the lustre imparted to him by his sweet qualities, or a combination of both. In fact, Valmiki's theme centres round Rama's qualities only and barring those qualities, which were referred to distinctly in the other questions, all the other qualities fall within the purview of the question कः युतिमान्? The Avataras serve to highlight the Lord's numerous attributes and the Sadhus, the Lord's devotees, *thrive* solely on the meditation of those qualities. The Sadhu-parithrana (साधु परित्राण) referred to by Sree Krishna in Bhagavat Gita (IV-8) will thus assume a new meaning. The Sadhus are being fed sumptuously by the Lord during His Avatars, where He provides the one and only source of sustenance of the former, by displaying His qualities in larger numbers.

Valmiki has not told us anything about Rama's infancy and introduces us to sage Viswamitra in sarga 18 of Balakanda, the very sarga in which Rama's birth has been mentioned. All that we know is that Rama was just 12 years of age, when he followed the sage for accomplishing the latter's Yaga. A huge gap of 12 years has thus been left uncovered. Luckily, our great Acharyas have, through their 'Tapas', been able to visualise the infancy of Rama. One outstanding incident referred to by them is how Lakshmana would not be separated from Rama right from infancy. To begin with, the two babies were set in different cradles in the places of their respective mothers. Baby Lakshmana started crying lustily and could not be placated by any means and on the advice of Sage Vasishta, Lakshmana's cradle was placed by the side of Rama's and even then Lakshmana could not be pacified fully. The final solution lay in both the babies being left in the same cradle and thereafter Lakshmana was found exceedingly cheerful and sprightly. This is indeed a tribute to the charm held out by Rama, even as a mere baby.

Viswamitra's advent is also meant to bring to the fore Rama's सौलभ्य, as already elucidated in Chapter I. While on this subject, it is pretty difficult to resist the temptation to make a passing mention of the way in which the Prince of Ayodhya mingled with Guha, the hunter and his exemplary behaviour towards the Rishis of Dandakaranya, although these have also been dealt with at some length in Chapter I. This extraordinary quality of सौलभ्य not merely shed lustre on those with whom Rama came in contact, but also imparted extra lustre to Rama himself.

CHAPTER XIV.

कः अनसूयकः ? (Who is non-jealous ?)

कः अनसूयकः ? Who is he, that is free from jealousy ? Jealousy is that base quality which vitiates one's outlook even to the extent of mistaking a good turn for a bad one and picking offence where there is none, or none is intended. We folks are of different kinds – some, who will recognise and accept as such, the good qualities in others, some others who will discern only the faults even when the good qualities are overwhelming, while there is yet another category, a microscopic minority, who will be so over-whelmingly generous and magnanimous as to see good in evil. Jealousy which brings out a jaundiced look (viz.) seeing evil in good, is an incurable malady.

In the 'Sankalpa Suryodaya', a play written by Sri Vedanta Desika, there are two beautiful slokas, which help us get at the range and depth of this unwholesome trait of 'Asuya'. In the first, beginning with the words "Mayi dattavadhanayam", he says that so long as the goddess of Asuya is awake, even the Lord Almighty can not escape being dubbed guilty and it is only when she gets fatigued and falls asleep, that God Himself can earn a good name. In the second sloka beginning with "Niravadhi-guna-grame", the author deplores the attitude of those, who are inclined to reproach even Sri Rama, who is the very embodiment of all good things and bring him into contempt – Rama is accused of having (i) encountered at the very outset, Thataka, a woman and slain her, (ii) shot dead the guiltless Vali, hiding, and /iii) retreated three steps behind during his encounter with Khara in Janasthana. The poet commiserates with us, saying that, if this is the fate of even Rama, the virtuous, we are nowhere, with our truck-load of vices and foibles.

Reverting to the third category of mankind referred to earlier, namely, those who will see good in evil, it is easy to perceive that such an angelic outlook implies a high degree of warmth and affection (Vatsalya). The poser “कः अनसूयकः ?” can as well be reworded as “कः वत्सलः ?”. Not being consumed by jealousy would be merely a negative virtue and to give it a positive turn it should be tinged with ‘Vatsalya’.

A second facet of “Asuya” is not to stand the sight of another’s opulence. Against this background, let us proceed to examine how Sri Rama was free from jealousy of either kind. While admitting Vibhishana into his camp, Rama argued that Vibhishana became entitled to protection and asylum not because he was free from guilt, but because he was full of it. In fact, if he were free from guilt and consequently, Rama admitted him into his fold, where was the question of invoking Rama’s grace? It is only while redeeming or salving the offender or the guilty, Rama’s quality of mercy shines forth in all its splendour. In Rama’s camp, Vibhishana’s admission was opposed vehemently by Sugreeva and several others, on the ground that he was after all from the enemy’s camp, enemy’s own brother, and could not, therefore, be trusted. Hanuman raised a lone voice in pleading for Vibhishana’s admission, for the reason that he was good-natured and stood on an entirely different footing from the rest of his brood. Neither of these appealed to Rama, who entertained Vibhishana for an entirely different reason. The very fact that the latter had come to Rama’s camp and sought asylum was enough to entitle him to Rama’s protection and what is more, even if Vibhishana had not come as a true friend and was an absolute imposter, it suited Rama all right. It was only then, Rama could invoke his inexhaustible fountain of love (Vatsalya), which would enable him to embrace whole-heartedly, the newcomer, his faults notwithstanding.

Rama would not merely be not jealous of another’s opulence but would positively rejoice over it. The subjects of King Dasaratha acknowledged this outstanding quality of Rama. While expatiating on the many qualities of head and heart of Rama, they said, *inter alia*, “उत्सवेषु च सर्वेषु पितेव परितुष्यति”. This is the manner and extent of Rama’s participation in the festivities and rejoicings in individual homes of the citizens of Ayodhya, which made them feel that he was verily the head of each household - the *patras familias*. It would be doing less than justice to Rama’s greatness and magnanimity if we just skipped over this great trait of his in such a superficial manner. Far from feeling envious of others’ greatness, Rama has actually elevated even the lowliest to sublime heights of grandeur and eminence. It was through Rama’s intimate

contact, personal charm and grace that the stature of Guha, the hunter, has been enhanced. Sabari, the huntress was sanctified by Rama's sweet glance, which she acknowledged in the following terms: "चक्षुषा तव सौम्येन पूतास्मि रघुनन्दन". The status of Sugreeva, the monkey-king, Angada, the heir-apparent and the monkeys, in general, was also enhanced a good deal on account of the benevolent grace shed by Rama. And then there was Jatayu, the vulture-king, on whom Rama lavished even greater love and attention than on his own father, King Dasaratha. Last but not least, comes Vibhishana, the King of the Rakshasas, on whom the kingdom of Lanka was bestowed by Rama, a gift which would last till eternity, until such time that Rama's name would flourish in this land of ours and in short, till the end of time. Is it not a matter for wonder and rejoicing that Rama was bent upon bringing round and edifying even his proclaimed enemies, "रिपूणामपि वत्सलः?"

CHAPTER XV

As already stated at the commencement of chapter XIII, we shall examine in this concluding chapter, poser No. 13 (viz.) "को जितक्रोधः?" in conjunction with the 16th poser (viz.) "कस्य बिभ्यति देवाश्च जातरोषस्य संयुगे?" The former means "who has conquered anger?" while the latter means "who is he, whose anger in the battlefield makes even the immortal Devas tremble?" Conquest of anger does not mean absolute freedom from anger. On the other hand, it only means keeping anger under absolute control—that is, invoking it as and when necessary, precisely to the extent needed for the occasion and being altogether free from it at other times. It is indeed the distinguishing trait of a true gentleman to banish anger, the moment the necessity for its exhibition is over. While meting out punishments, the King has to be necessarily stern with the criminal or the evil-doer; the teacher has to deal with his refractory students likewise and so also the father, his loving son. The administrators of the correctives should not, however, carry their anger any further and make their subjects feel miserable.

Indeed Rama looked most formidable on the battlefield, while off the field, he looked the very personification of gentleness and one would even suspect whether anger would ever approach him. Therefore it was that Narada described Rama in one and the same breath as "सदैव प्रियदर्शनः", "सोमवत् प्रियदर्शनः" as well as "कालाग्निसदृशः क्रोधे".

Rama would never punish the unguilty; on the other hand, he would mix freely with such an one and make him feel perfectly at ease.

It might be asked whether both the posers referred to at the outset would be necessary and whether the earlier one (viz.) “को जितक्रोधः?” will not suffice. It is obvious that the latter one is not contained in the former. The essential difference between the two posers, however, lies in the fact that the former deals with the circumstances in which anger was kept under effective control by Rama, while the latter deals with a different set of circumstances in which anger easily got the better of Rama. Contrary to the normal human trend of getting more angry with those who harm or offend us directly, than with those, who deal badly with and give a raw deal to our friends and relations, Rama just ignored any personal affront or harm done to him by others, while his anger knew no bounds when his friends, allies and devotees were harmed or injured. For example, when the king of the oceans did not present himself before Rama, who lay prostrating before the former, even after a lapse of three days, Rama just got angry, as conveyed by the words “समुद्रस्य ततः क्रुद्धः” (6-21-13). Again, when Rama was pitted against fourteen thousand Rakshasas in Janasthana, he just summoned anger to provide the necessary motive force in waging the battle: क्रोधमाहारयत् तीव्रं वधार्थं सर्वरक्षसाम् (3-24-34).

On the other hand, when Rama saw a monkey soldier, (Hanuman) wounded by Ravana, Rama's anger became uncontrollable, as brought out by

ततो रामो महातेजा रावणेन कृतव्रणम्, दृष्ट्वा प्लवगशार्दूलं क्रोधस्य वशमेयिवान् ॥ (6-59-136)

Actually, Hanuman served as Rama's chariot in the battle-field. Hanuman, who was holding by the legs Rama, mounted on his shoulders, could hardly defend himself against the onslaught of Ravana. Seated in the upper region, Rama could repel successfully Ravana's attack and ward off each one of the latter's missiles. Down below, a plethora of arrows had struck Hanuman and were sticking out of his undefended person and it was only when Rama looked below and saw the enormous harm done to Hanuman by Ravana, he flew into a rage. c. f. Lord Krishna's reply to king Duryodhana's query as to why the former dined at Vidura's house, instead of at Bhishma's or Drona's. Whereas Duryodhana could not reconcile himself with the idea of Krishna eating out of the hands of Vidura, a mere Sudra, Krishna looked upon *Bhishma and Drona*, though of an exalted order, as his own enemies, inasmuch as they had ranged themselves opposite to the Pandavas. There was the shastraic injunction in regard to accepting food at the hands of an enemy. Apart from the fact that Krishna then visited Hastinapur as an emissary of the Pandavas, the Pandavas were, according to his admission, just as dear to him as his own life— “मम प्राणा हि पाण्डवाः”.